

THE
Unsearchable Riches
OF
CHRIST,
AND OF
GRACE and GLORY,

In and through HIM:

Diligently searched into, clearly unfolded, and comfortably holden forth, in Fourteen rich Gospel-Sermons preached on several Texts, at Communion in GLASGOW.

By the late pious and powerful Gospel preacher in that City,

Mr. JAMES DURHAM,

Author of the Commentary on the Revelation, &c.

1 JOHN i. 3. *That which we have seen and heard, declare we unto you, that ye may have fellowship with us: And truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.*

1 COR. x. 16. *The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?*

F A L K I R K:

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T H E
EPISTLE DEDICATORY
And PREFATORY,

To all Christians seriously pursuing Conformity unto CHRIST, and panting after Communion with God in Him: Particularly the Inhabitants of the City of *Glasgow*, that are such: And in special, to Mrs. *Durham*, the famous Author's worthy Relict and my Sister-in-law, who hath had a singular Care to preserve her deceased Husband's Lectures and Sermons, that they might be made forthcoming for the publick Use and Edification of the Church.

DEAR FRIENDS,

ADAM in innocency and integrity was in a state of perfect friendship with God, of beautiful conformity to his image, and of sweetly comfortable communion with him: But, alas! he continued very short time in that excellent state; for the entring in of sin, by his transgressing the law and condition of the Covenant of Works, quite brake off the friendship, utterly disfigured and defaced the conformity, and altogether interrupted and put a stop to the communion; he having thereby run himself and his posterity under a forfeiture of that desirable state, and of all the precious privileges annexed to it: under which himself and they had lien eternally, had not God in the depth of his infinite wisdom, and in the exceeding and unsearchable riches of grace and mercy, devised and found out a way for taking that forfeiture, "by sending his Son, made of a woman,

“made under the law, to redeem them that were under the “law;” who according to the covenant of redemption, treated and transacted, finally concluded and agreed betwixt JEHOVAH and Him, having made a most costly, but a most complete satisfaction to provoked divine justice for the debt of the elect; in whose room, for that end, he did surrogate and substitute himself, as their Surety and Cautioner, hath re-established the friendship, restored the conformity, and recovered the communion: Of which glad tidings of great joy, publication is made in the preached gospel; the tabernacle of the ordinances whereof is reared up amongst men, that thereby “GOD the LORD may dwell among them;” these ordinances in their institution and nature being means of communion and fellowship betwixt GOD and men: Amongst which divinely instituted ordinances that of the LORD’S SUPPER beareth expressly the name of the COMMUNION, because often and ordinarily the greatest measures and highest degrees of communion with GOD in CHRIST, attainable by sojourning and militant saints here on earth, are won at in the participation of that Ordinance. the great pledge and love-token of our dying Lord’s dearest respect to his disciples and followers, calling and obliging them, in the use thereof, to a solemn commemoration of him and of his love, and to a publick and avouched declaration of his death till he come again: Therefore is it beyond all other gospel-ordinances, as it were, railed about with such injunctions, cautions, and warnings, with such terrible threatnings, with such intimations of atrocious guilt and with such denunciations of formidable judgments against unworthy communicants, thunders and lightnings (as it were) being spoken against such The desirable deceased Author of these few following Sermons preached at Communion, used at such Occasions to endeavour, through grace, to rouse and work up himself to such a divineness of frame, as very much suited the spiritual state and majesty of that Ordinance. greatly fearing lest himself, or any of the people to whom he dispensed the same, should fall under the grievous “guilt of the “Body and Blood of the LORD:” Then, in a manner, his face shone, as being in the mount of communion and fellowship with GOD; and, at some of those solemn and sweet Occasions, he spake some way as a man that had been in heaven, commending JESUS CHRIST, making a glorious display of the banner of free grace, holding forth the riches

of it very clearly and convincingly, and bringing the offers thereof very low, wonderfully low; so that, in hearing some of those sermons, particularly that on Matth. xxii I was made to think, that the rope or cord of the offer of salvation was let down and hung so low to sinners, that those of the lowest stature amongst them all, tho' but as Pigmeys, might have catcht hold of it, who, through grace, had thy mind to do so; and so home, so vehemently and urgently pressed, on so sweet and easy terms to be embraced, that I have been sometimes made to wonder how the hearers could refuse or shift them: But there is no saving belief of this report made by the Prophets, Apostles, yea, or by the blessed JESUS himself in his own personal ministry, but where "the Arm of the LORD is revealed; no man can, "or will (invite, beseech and persuade who will, if it were "not only men, but even angels,) come to the Son, except "the Father that sent Him draw him:" There is no moving here, without a pull of Omnipotency; none are nor can be willing to yield themselves to Christ, till "the day of his "power" pass on their hearts; till then, they will sit the most pressing Calls of the Gospel, but then they can sit no longer, they must, they will rise then, and run after him; they will then (as the word signifies) make a free-will-offering of themselves to him, however inexecutable and inflexible they had shewed themselves before; they will then make an absolute, entire, universal, unexcepted and irreversible surrender and resignation of themselves to him, to be at his disposal, to be guided and saved by him in his own way. I know, the remembrance of those Communion-Sabbaths, High Sabbaths, and other ordinary Sabbaths and Week-days, wherein you siter, and other serious seekers of GOD in Glasgow in particular, "heard the joyful sound, "walked in the light of GOD's countenance, and rejoiced in "his name all the day." living in a holy pursuit of precious Gospel-Ordinances, and having, as it were, the heavenly Manna of the Gospel falling abundantly about your camp every day, making you think and say, "That it was good "to be there." is this day sweet and savoury to you, and helps you, in a good measure, to keep up a suitable and due esteem of fellowship and communion with the Father, and with his Son JESUS CHRIST, which is commended and endeared to your souls, and to the souls of others of the LORD's people, by the choice, rare, excellent and none-such

nature and properties of it; it being found by you all, privileged with admission to the enjoyment thereof, in your experience, to be, **FIRST**, most real, and no chimerical fancy, or a thing that hath no being but in the excluded imagination of the person: "And truly (saith the apostle John, 1 John "i. 3.) our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son "JESUS CHRIST." It hath most real effects, tho' spiritual, gracious souls being more lively affected with them, than their very external senses are by the rarest and most remarkable effects: And no doubt, the more spiritual any thing is, it hath in it the greater reality, and worketh the more powerfully and efficaciously. It is uncontrovertible and quite removed from all reach of rational debate, that God is the greatest reality; and, by proportion, communion with God, whereby nearest and closest approaches are made to him, must be very real: "Marvellous are the effects of "this Communion, and that your souls know right well," as the Psalmist speaketh, Psal. cxxxix. 14. in another case. **SECONDLY**, It is an awful fellowship, and full of dread; it impresseth the soul with a deep, yet kindly, veneration of the glorious majesty of the great and holy God, "who " (as it is said, Psal. lxxxix. 7) is greatly to be feared in "the assemblies of his saints, (where they are admitted to "fellowship with him,) and to be had in reverence by all "that are about him." When Jacob was admitted to very near communion with him, Gen. xxviii. he saith, ver. 16. "Surely the Lord is in this place, and I was not aware." And ver. 17. it is said of him, that "He was afraid, and "said, How dreadful is this place! this is none other but "the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven." Familiarity here breeds no contempt, nor is it waited with any neglect or forgetfulness to keep due distance. — **THIRDLY**, It is a deeply humbling, and holily self-debasing fellowship; as appears in Abraham, Gen. xviii. who being, as God's special friend, admitted to talk with him at an unusual and extraordinary rate of familiarity, yet interlines (as it were) his discourse, almost in every period of it, with deeply self-debasing acknowledgments of his being but dust and ashes; and deprecatings of God's anger for his taking upon him to speak to him, betwixt whom and himself there was so infinitely vast a disproportion. So the prophet Isaiah when he hath that glorious vision of the Majesty of GOD, Chap. vi. and hears the Seraphims, those purely intellectual

creatures, having their faces covered with their wings, as not being able to behold the brightness of the glory of the most absolutely perfect holiness of God, crying in a transport of admiration, each to another, "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD GOD of Hosts; the earth is full of his glory!" he saith, "Wo's me for I am undone because I am a man of unclean lips, and dwell in the midst of a people of polluted lips, for mine eyes have seen the KING the LORD of Hosts." So also Job, soon after in his time, according to divine testimony, when he is admitted to unusual nearness to God, saith, Chap. xlii. "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth thee; wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." The nearest approaches to that light wherein there is no darkness at all, make the clearest discoveries of the most eminent saints their unworthiness, nothingness, and vileness. —

FOURTHLY, It is a transforming fellowship, and assimilates the person privileged with admission to it, to him that is conversed with, and with whom fellowship is attained unto; there is no real communion with him, but the result of it is some lineament of further likeness to him: "We all (saith the Apostle, 2 Cor. iii. 18) beholding the glory of the Lord as in a glass, are changed (or transformed) into the same image, from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord." Communion with, and conformity to God, have mutual influence and reciprocal force each upon other: The more communion with him, the more likeness and conformity to him; the more likeness to him, the more communion with him; little communion with him, makes little conformity to him, and little conformity to him cannot but be attended with little communion with him. FIFTHLY, It is a wonderful fellowship, a fellowship that even sometimes transports, in a manner, the soul admitted to it, especially in any more than ordinary way or measure, into a sort ofapture and extasy of admiration at it: Thus it did David, 2 Sam. vii. 18. "Who (saith he,) am I, O Lord, and what is my father's house, that thou hast brought me hitherto?" And Solomon, who being very near to God, in that solemn prayer of his at the dedication of the temple, saith, 1 Kings iii. 27 "But will God indeed dwell with men on earth?" And, as it is, 2 Chron. vi. ver. 18. But will God in very deed dwell with men on earth?" And indeed it is no great wonder that it be greatly wondered at, that the infinitely

great and holy GOD "who inhabiteth eternity," and the high and lofty One who dwelleth in the high and holy "place," and is surrounded and attended there with an innumerable company of angels, and of the spirits of just men made perfect, all of them shining in light, and burning in zeal, none of them wearying to do him service, should humble himself so far, and stoop so low, so very low, as to dwell "Also" (an emphatic *Also*,) with sinful, though "humble and contrite creatures, who dwell in cottages of clay, and whose habitation is in the dust;" that He who is of purer eyes than that He can behold iniquity, without detestation and abhorrence, should yet humble himself not only to behold, but with delight to dwell and keep fellowship with them who are in a great measure unholy, and have so much of that dwelling in them, which his soul hates; that the glorious Persons of the dreadful and adorable Godhead should come and make their abode with such, in whom so great a remainder of stinking unmortified corruption hath still its abode; that infinitely pure and perfect light should have fellowship with them in whom there is so much darkness. *SIXTHLY*, It is an estranging fellowship from all idols, and whatever is displeasing to God and estranging from him; accordingly Ephraim, being brought near to him, saith, (Hos. xiv. 8.) "What have I to do any more with idols?" And the people of God, supposed to be in a good spiritual frame, and near to him, say, Isa. xxx. 22. to every idol (which they cast away as a menstruous cloth) with indignation and abhorrency "Get thee hence." And David, being admitted to very near communion with God, Psal. vi. saith, ver. 8. to wicked men, by whose company he might have been estranged from him, "Depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity; for the Lord hath heard the voice of my weeping, the Lord hath heard the voice of my supplication." And indeed it is highly suitable and congruous, that it should be so; "for what agreement hath the temple of God with idols?" And believers "are the temple of the living God," as the Apostle affirms, 2 Cor. vi. 16. — *SEVENTHLY*, It is a heart-quickning and reviving fellowship: therefore he is said, Isa. lvii. vers. 15. to "dwell with him that is humble and of a contrite spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite one." *EIGHTHLY*, It is a heart-staying, calming and composing fellowship: It husheth into silence, and drives

away, disquieting, perplexing and excruciating fears; and therefore saith the Psalmist when near to God; Psal. iii. 5. 6. "I laid me down and slept; I awaked, for the Lord sustained me: I will not be afraid of ten thousands of people that have set themselves against me round about." And Psal. iv. 8. "I will both lay me down in peace and sleep: for thou, Lord, only makest me dwell in safety." So, Psal. xxvii. 13, 14. **NINTHY**, It is a heart-cheering, refreshing, and rejoicing fellowship: The refreshing and joy that result from fellowship with God, do quite surpass and transcend the joy that the men of the world have in the enjoyment of all their earthly pleasures: "Lift thou up (saith the Psalmist in the name of the godly, Psal. iv. 7. in contradistinction from, and opposition to, those **MANY** who cry, "Who will shew us any good?" debasing and in a manner brutifying themselves, as if they had not rational and immortal souls capable of enjoying God the chief Good, the only Object suited compleatly to satisfy their most enlarged desires:) "Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us; for thou hast caused more joy of heart to me, (to wit, thereby,) than when their corn and wine abound." And, Psal. lxxxix. 16. those who walk in the light of his countenance, are said to "rejoice in his name all the day:" Thus, when he prays, Psal. xliii. for admission to fellowship with God in his public ordinances (to which he had gone with others of his people, "with the voice of joy and gladness, as they that keep holy-days," as he telleth us in the preceeding Psalm,) he promiseth in that case, that he will "go unto the altar of God, unto God his exceeding joy," the gladness or joy of his joy, the very heart and soul of his joy, or the cream of it, as some translations render the word; there is reality, solidity, strength and efficacy in that joy; it is heart-joy, while as in the very midst of the carnal joy, jollity and mirth of natural men, arising from the greatest affluence of worldly pleasures and enjoyments, "their heart is sorrowful," as Solomon saith: There is no solidity in it, it hath not a bottom: if they would but a little retire within themselves, and ask for a reason of their laughter, mirth and jollity, 't would instantly vanish and their hearts would die within them as stones; 'tis kept up, to their delusion and ruin, by their abstracting from, and non-reflecting upon the unsolidity and irrelevancy of the grounds thereof: But the more the ground of this joy of the godly be reflected on,

The Epistle Dedicatory

considered and searched into, they are found to be the more able to bear the highest superstructures of their joy. —
TENTHLY, It is such a fellowship, that, whatever measure of it be attained by sojourning saints, it waketh desires, sharpeneth appetite, and stirreth up kindly longings for more and yet more of it, even till it be compleated: Thus Moses the Man of God, and his great favourite, whom he knew face to face, when admitted to very much familiar fellowship with him, and is told, that he had found grace in his sight, that he knew him by name, and that at his earnest desire his presence should go with him, Exod. xxxiii. 12, 13, 14. yet saith he to the LORD, ver. 18. "I beseech thee, shew me thy glory." So holy Job, God's darling, whose candle shined on his head, by whose light he walked through darkness, and on whose tabernacle the secret of God was, yet with much holy longing cries, Chap. xxiii. 3. "O that I knew where I might find him! I would come even to his seat. And comforts himself amidst all his sorrows with the assured hope of the fully satisfying sight and enjoyment of his Redeemer at the latter day. So likewise the Spouse in the Song, who had often been brought into the banqueting-house, having the banner of her Beloved's love spread over her; whose left hand had lain often under her head, and whose right hand had embraced her: who had often sitten down under his shadow with great delight, and found his fruit sweet to her taste; whose spikenard did send forth the smell thereof, while the King sat at his table; who had frequently found, by the kisses of his mouth, his love to be better than wine: and to whom he had often given his loves in the Vineyards: Yet cries, in the conclusion of that high Song, "Make haste (or hie) my Beloved, and be thou like to a roe or to a young hart on the mountains of spices." So was it also with David, the man according to God's heart, who had much sweet communion with him in his wandrings and wilderness-condition, in caves and dens of the earth; and had often seen his power and his glory in the sanctuary; yet pants and breathes after more fellowship with him, even as the chased hart doth after the water-brooks, and cries, "When shall I come and appear before God?" Psal. xlii. So in like manner was it with the Apostle Paul, CHRIST's great minion, who, beside all the good days he had in dispensing Gospel ordinances, in planting and watering churches, in converting and edifying multitudes of souls, in his trium-

thing, by making manifest the favour of Christ's knowledge, had been ravished into the third heavens, caught up into paradise, and heard there unspeakable words, that were not lawful or possible to be uttered; yet, as if he had never been with him, "desired to be dissolved, and to be with CHRIST, at best of all: and groans within himself, longing to be absent from the body, and present with the Lord." And thus was it, finally, with John the Divine, the beloved Disciple, who had often lain in his sweet Master's bosom, and could confidently say, "Truly our fellowship is with the FATHER, and with his SON JESUS CHRIST," closeth his Revelations with that holy passionate desire, "Even so, come, LORD JESUS."

Dear Friends, let it be more than ever your great work and business to keep yourselves in case and capacity to enjoy his blessed company and fellowship: And, in order to this end, 1. Study to keep yourselves through grace as chaste virgins to CHRIST JESUS as your one Husband: Let Him be to you as the loving hart and pleasant roe; let his embraces satisfy you at all times, and be ye always ravished with his love, and beware of embracing the bosom of a stranger; let Him be to you as a bundle of myrrhie lying all night betwixt your breasts; be for Him, and not for another, so shall he be for and with you, resting in his love, and rejoicing over you with singing. 2. Touch no unclean thing, hate the very garment spotted with the flesh, abstain tenderly from all appearance of evil: O defile not those temples of the living GOD, of the HOLY GHOST, which temples ye are; let no unclean thing be harboured or tolerated there, nothing that may provoke him to leave or lothe his dwelling and temple, nothing that may make his abode at them grievous, unpleasant, lothsome, or wearisome to him. 3. Let all his Ordinances and Duties of his Worship be high in your esteem, and much commended and even endeared to your hearts, as means of communion and fellowship with him: O be much in love with the habitation of his house, and the place where his honour dwells: Let his tabernacles be very amiable to you; these are his haunt, and let them be yours. 4. Beware of all sinful dalliances with idols, whereby the soul is estranged from communion with GOD; for there is no agreement betwixt the temple of GOD and idols: from love to fellowship with him, and from zeal to his glory, bid them all, with indignation, begone, saying to

them, "What have we any more to do with idols?" And as to a menstruous cloth, Get you hence. 5. When he hides his face, withdraws his presence, and suspends you from fellowship with him, be troubled, arise, shake off laziness, sloth, and security; be holily restless, and go the round (as it were) of all commanded duties, till you find him; seek him diligently in the night-watches on your bed; go forth to the streets and broad places; go to the watchmen, and seek him whom your souls love: You will have gone but a little, and you shall find him; and, when you have found him, hold him and let him not go; do not awake nor raise him till he please. 6. Study to be very humble, tender and contrite of heart, to be poor in spirit, constantly sensible of your spiritual poverty, emptiness, wants and indigencies; and to tremble at his word; at commands lest they be not suitably obeyed; at threatnings, lest they be executed; at promises, lest you seem to come short of them: For it is in persons thus qualified that he delights to dwell, and it is to such that he loves to look, as is very clear, Isa. lvii. 15 and lxvi. 2. 7. Love, prize, improve, and, as ye have access, study to keep up (as you, sister, in particular are helped through grace to do beyond many) the communion of saints those excellent ones of the earth, in whom, next to his own blessed self, all your delights should be: In communion with those saints, communion with the King of saints is readily attained, it being here that He commands the blessing, even life for evermore. 8. Be much in the lively exercise of faith in, and of love to, the LORD JESUS: And be spiritually precise, strict, exact, accurate and punctual in obedience to all his commands, from principles of faith and love: and CHRIST and his Father will love you, and come and make their abode with you, as he promiseth, John xiv. 21, 23. O desirable guests, and worthy of all possible welcome of all ready and cheerful entertainment! Follow hard after Him, constantly and closely pursue conformity to Him, and communion with him: It is but a little, and the conformity to Him shall be completed, and you likened perfectly to him, according to creature-capacity; and the communion with him which is now but in part, (as all the spiritual privileges and enjoyments of the people of GOD while upon earth are, shall be fully perfected, shall be immediate, without the intervention of the comparatively dark glass of Ordinances, even to seeing him face to face, and as he is)

and shall be eternally uninterrupted, without the least cloud or moment's eclipse: Now it is a cloud and a clear day, a sun-blink and anon a shower, "rara hora, brevis mora," a rare hour, but quickly gone; it shall not be so then. O desirable and delightful day! O sweet, singularly sweet and solacious day! O rare and ravishing day! Let all other days pass and hasten away, and let that glorious day come: Even so, come, LORD JESUS, and tarry not. I am,

Beloved Christian Friends,

and dear Sister,

11 JY 63

Your very affectionate Friend,

and seriously well-wishing Servant in the Gospel,

J. C.

I heartily wish that this mite of service may be acceptable to the saints, it being not improbable that it may be the last service of this kind that I shall have access to do them.

FEB. 4 1685.

B



S E R M O N I.

A Preparation SERMON for the C O M M U N I O N.

I COR. xi. 29.

For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's Body.

IT hath been so ordered in the good providence of God, that ye have lately heard of that main, very comprehensive and indispensibly necessary duty, called for from all that would worthily partake of the Ordinance of the LORD'S Supper, for which we are now making ready, viz. Self-examination; in reference to which, the apostle having perceived many faults and failings in these Corinthians, and much unsuitableness as to their Communicating; gives advertisement, that whoever for the time to come would aright approach to the Table of the LORD, "would examine themselves, and so eat:" And, knowing well that this is a difficult exercise, and that there is naturally a great deal of averfness in peoples hearts to it, he judgeth it meet to press the exhortation to that necessary, tho' difficult duty, by a reason or motive set down in the words now read in your hearing; "For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself:" As if he had said, You have need to look well to the examination of yourselves, for, if ye neglect or miscarry in that duty, your hazard and danger is dreadfully great through unworthy communicating; which if ye would escape, then make conscience narrowly and carefully to examine yourselves. The last words of the verse are a

confirmation of the reason, and do shew why the Lord is so holily severe in punishing and plaguing those who approach to his Table unworthily through not examining of themselves, because they discern not the Lord's Body: The force whereof is, that there is a most singular and gracious presence of the Lord Christ in the Sacrament of his Supper, and therefore the person who goes not aright about it, doth put a great disrespect upon, yea, doth even vilify him who is thus present in that Ordinance.

It is the first part of these words, that at this time we would mainly speak to; wherein we would explicate the meaning of these three. 1st, To eat and drink unworthily, here, is to eat and drink unsuitably or unbecomingly; as the apostle, when he willeth the Christian Romans, Chap. xvi. 2. to receive Phebe as becometh and is suitable to saints, he makes use of the word worthily, for so it is in the original; and this, being the opposite to that, is to be understood unsuitably and unbecomingly to such a manifestation of the love of Christ, in giving himself to and for his people: As in our common language, when a man does a thing unsuitably, we say he did it unworthily, when it answers not the end proposed. 2dly, Judgment, or Damnation, here, takes in these Three things. 1. A temporal stroke; as, ver. 30, 31. "For this cause many among you are sickly and weak, and many sleep." 2. It may look to eternal judgment; as damnation is often taken in scripture. 3. It may look to spiritual judgments; for tho' a believer be not capable of eternal judgment, yet by unworthy communicating he may draw upon himself temporal strokes and spiritual judgments; he may much wear out the life of grace, and bring himself under blasting and withering: And unbelievers draw upon themselves not only those, but eternal damnation, and that with a higher degree of aggravation. 3dly, That he is said to eat and drink this to himself, as in the former verse a man is commanded to examine himself: It may take in these two, as aimed at by the apostle, 1. It is to provoke every man to his particular duty, from his particular hazard, he hazards his own soul. 2. 'Tis put here, to shew the restriction of the judgment according to the sin; and so, if a man examine himself, tho' others neglect it, the judgment shall not overtake him; but if he examine not himself, whoever escape judgment, he shall not escape it: And thus

'tis an encouragement to a man to go about the duty of self examination, as well as a motive of terror. Corinth being corrupted with many abuses, one person could not amend all: Well, (says he) "Let a man examine himself," and so he shall escape the hazard; if not, he will fall under it.

We shall first draw some observations from the words, and then speak a word for Use.

FIRST, It is supposed here, that in this ordinance of the Lord's Supper there is a special eminency, excellency, dignity and worth; or, this Ordinance of the Lord's Supper is of a singular solemn nature: And this I gather partly from this verse considered in itself, 'He that eats and drinks unworthily,' implies that there is a special worthiness in it, that a man should not offer indignity to; and partly from the connexion of this verse with the former, for it is made a reason why he presses particular and strict self-examination, which shews that there is a more singular excellency in this Ordinance than in others; and partly from the context, for every circumstance speaks out a solemnity in this Ordinance; as, (1.) The night when it was instituted, ver. 23. 'The same night in which he was betrayed:' And when he was taking his goodnight of his disciples. (2.) His jealousy of, and his quarrelling and threatening for the abuse of this Ordinance, speaks out a special excellency in the Ordinance, that all who approach thereunto should be suitably affected with. All the Ordinances of the Lord are excellent; for if all his works be excellent, then much more the Gospel-Ordinances, as being a step above those; and yet this Ordinance of the Lord's Supper seems dignified with an eminency and excellency above them all. 1. In reference to what it sets out and exhibits: They all set out love, but this sets out love in an eminent degree; for it sets forth the Lord's Death, wherein the most eminent step and degree of his love shines: yea, this Ordinance sets out his actual dying, and so sets out his love in its liveliest colours, and as the great master-piece of it. 2. In respect of the excellent benefits communicated in it: It is true, there is no other thing on the matter communicate in it, than there is communicate in the Word and Baptism; yet, if we look to the words, 'Take ye; eat ye; this is my Body;' they hold out Christ Jesus not so much giving any particular gift, as actually conferring himself in his death and suffering: And the main

scope being to confer CHRIST and all that is in him to the believer, it holds out some way the excellency of this Ordinance beyond others. 3. In respect of the manner how our Lord Jesus makes over himself; whereby I mean not only the clearness of his making over himself, for in this Ordinance there is the clearest view of a slain Saviour, and of covenanting with God; and often the most comfortable manifestations of love go alongst with it, for which cause 'tis called eminently **THE COMMUNION**: But also that there is here a clear glance of heaven upon earth, JESUS CHRIST and his people mixing, (to speak so) and being familiar together; he condescending not only to keep company with them, but to be their food and refreshment; and he giving them not only the word to their faith, but himself (as it were) to their sense, in so far as the mean whereby he communicateth himself is more sensible; it is by his Spirit that the mean is made effectual. And there is not only a fixedness of faith on our part, but a sort of divineness in the Ordinance itself; the very first-fruits of heaven being communicate, as it were, to the very senses of the believer: "I say unto you, (says the Lord, Matth. xxvi. 29.) I will not drink henceforth of the fruit of the vine, until that day I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom." Where he seems to point out a more special way of keeping communion with his people in this Ordinance, in resemblance to that which he will have with them in heaven; there being here a more special union and communion betwixt the head and members sealed up, a type of that which is to be in heaven, a taste whereof is sometimes given in this Ordinance of the Communion: Hence 'tis not only called the **COMMUNION**, as in the foregoing chapter, but the "**Communion of the Body and Blood of CHRIST**," and the "**Table of the LORD**."

The first Use of it serves to let us see how much we are obliged to CHRIST JESUS: What could he have given more than himself? And what mean could have been invented, that could have more confirmed and warmed the hearts of his people than this, which is so lively a representation and commemoration of his blessed Body? Very like we might come to discern his body better, if there were a more high estimation of this Ordinance; not as if there were any efficacy in it of itself to communicate grace; yet,

in respect of Christ's institution, 'tis a most lively mean of grace: And there is not a circumstance in all the action, but it is to be wondred at; as, that it was instituted the same night he was betrayed, and after the paschal supper, when the traitor Judas was going to bring the band of soldiers to take him; that he warrants us to take it, and that we have therein sweet communion amongst ourselves: Every thing in it ought to draw us to admire his sufferings, and the great love they came from, and the notable effects thereof to us.

The second Use serves to provoke us to study to be in a solemn divine heavenly frame for such a solemn divine heavenly action as this is, and thorowly to examine ourselves, and to see that all things be in good order; like to a bride that is to be married to morrow, who will be trying on her marriage-clothes and seeing that all things be right. I shall not descend to particulars, but, in three or four words in the general, only point at such a frame as we conceive is called for from you. 1 It should be such a frame as ye would desire to be in, if Christ were coming personally and visibly to marry you to morrow: And O that this night might thus be a brydel or marriage-evening to us all! Consider what frame we would wish to be in, if we were to meet with him, and strike hands with him personally and visibly: Study and seek after such a frame. 2 It should be such a frame as we would desire to have, if we were going to give up the ghost, when all earthly things will be insignificant and of little worth to us; even such a frame as if our eternal peace and happiness were depending on that chock. This would be the night of making our testament (as it were) and of the adjusting our accounts with God, and of putting things to a point betwixt him and us; otherwise our debt may increase and grow greater, and it will not be so easy for us to win to a discharge of it. 3 It should be such a frame as we would desire to be found in, if the day of judgment were coming, and if that day were to be to morrow: O how humble, how abstracted from the things of a present world, and how confirmed in the faith of God's love, would we study to be, if the voice of the arch-angel and of the last trumpet were sounding, and a solemn meeting of all before the tribunal of Christ were presently to be! What a frame (I say) would ye desire to

be in, in such a case! Even such a frame should ye study to be in this night, as ye would desire to be found in, in that day: We fear it will be to many then a prick and a sting in their consciences with in them, that they made so little conscience to be in a suitable frame for this so solemn an Ordinance: The text tells that a sentence will pass on every one of you, and you would by all means labour to be in such a posture as the sentence may not be terrible to you. 4. It should be a heavenly and divine frame; for if it be a heavenly and divine action, ye would consider what a frame it calleth for; how abstracted (as I just now said) the heart should be from the world; and from your carnal delights; how much in heaven, and conversant with God; what a pitch your communion with God should be raised to, in apprehending of, and meditating on him, in considering of, and admiring at the sufferings of Christ, and at the love they came from; tasting that he is good, and even delighting and solacing yourselves in his love; which is the Lord's allowance on his people, when the action is humbly and reverently gone about.

Secondly, observe, That tho' this be a most singularly solemn Ordinance, and solemnly to be gone about, yet oft-times men and women go most unworthily about it, and abuse it. This is implied in the words, and we need not many proofs of it: If we will read from the 20 ver. to this, we will find it sufficiently proved: and if we look forward to ver. 20. & 31. we will find that many sad strokes came on these Corinthians for abusing and profaning this Ordinance, and the apostle would have them gathering their unworthy communicating from these strokes. There is a readiness both in unbelievers and in believers themselves to miscarry in going about this Ordinance; a readiness in unbelievers; for as they spoil all things, all ordinances and duties they meddle with, all things being unclean to the unbeliever, so there is a miserable and woful necessity lying upon them to spoil this Ordinance; and a readiness even in believers who also may miscarry therein, as is implied in the last words of the chapter, compared with ver. 32. "When we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world." Some of them that were believers were chastised for this fault, to prevent their eternal ruin: And are there any acquainted with their own corrupt nature, but

they may and will in some measure find in themselves an aptitude to miscarry, as in all other duties and ordinances, so in this! But the doctrine holds out a singular and peculiar bentness to miscarry in this duty and Ordinance; so that one who will pray with advertency, and be carried fairly thorow in that and several other duties, may yet in this Ordinance fall under the guilt of unworthy communicating: The reasons of it may be these, First, Because the more solemn the duty be, and the greater concurrence of duties be in it, there is the greater difficulty in going about it; for a soul cannot be right in this, except it be right in a number of other duties and graces, as in prayer, faith, love, and repentance: And that word, "Let a man examine himself," takes in a complication of duties and graces; there would be a good state and a good frame, and graces would be in some vigour, and every duty suitable and proportionable to the nature of the action and of the day. And if it be a great and difficult work to carry rightly on an ordinary sabbath, or in prayer, or meditation, or other duties any day, what a difficult work must it needs be to have all these rightly yoked together? A second reason may be drawn not only from the complication of graces and duties, that is required in this action; but from the nature of the thing itself, that calls for duties in a high degree of spirituality: If any ordinance or duty call for a spiritual frame, 'tis this: It requires that the exercise of the judgment be most clear, that faith be most distinct, that meditation be most divine, &c. And the more spiritual the duty be, there is certainly the more aptness in us, thro' our corruption, to miscarry in it. A third Reason is, Because there is in men and women naturally and ordinarily but very little study and endeavour to know and take up aright the nature of this ordinance: There is in the most part a great ignorance of the strain and series of the gospel; but generally there is a greater ignorance, darkness and blindness as to the right partaking of this Ordinance, than as to most others; either thro' the difficulty of it, or thro' our laziness that puts us not to study it better: So that if it were asked at many of us who may have some affection, What is a Communion? and what is the right way of partaking of it? there would be found but very little distinctness in the thing: and many content themselves to live without clearness about it: And this makes people

incapable to go about it aright. A fourth Reason is from peoples lothness to bestir themselves in the work of preparation for it: There is some self-examination requisite for every duty, but there is a more solemn self-examination enjoined in reference to this; and how very reluctant are we to it? And seeing examination of ourselves is as the door and entry to this duty, is it any wonder that most persons communicate unworthily? this exercise of self-searching being so much slighted, which is to the most part so very difficult, and to many through their own fault impossible.

The first Use serves for warning as to this matter. It is easy to get a token and to come to the table, but it is not so easy to eat and drink worthily, not so easy to discern the Lord's Body, and to get Christ himself in the Ordinance; and, in a word, so to go about partaking of the Lord's Supper, as ye may have solid quietness of mind in reflecting on it. Is it not a wonder, then, that the most part do so securely and in a manner even desperately rush upon it, who have, it may be, ten, some ten, some twenty, some thirty years without trouble under this guilt? We would think it a good piece of preparation, if ye were seriously afraid to become guilty of the Body and Blood of the Lord: Want of this holy fear breeds security, and keeps from stirring up to duty, and from reflecting on ourselves; whereas, if the heart were stirred and roused with such a fear, there would be greater and more seriously sharpened diligence in all these duties, whereof we heard from the foregoing words, to which this is a strong and pressing motive.

The second Use serves for trial, who among the great company gathered together here this day are afraid of sinning against God, and taking his name in vain in so solemn an ordinance. Many think they are prepared, but we think not that person the better prepared, that is not afraid and holily jealous over himself: Wo, wo to many on account of the Communion-days that are past and gone without fear: It were good that ye were afraid lest this day prove like many former days, and lest any of you come short of what hath been attained in former Communion-days.

THIRDLY, observe, That the sin of unworthy Communicating is a wrath-provoking and a judgment-drawing-on-sin: "He that eats and drinks unworthily, eats and

drinks damnation to himself." There is hardly any sin that the Lord will more readily, speedily, and sadly plague and punish, than this: It is true, the Lord hath annexed that certification to the Third Commandment, that "He will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain:" But is there any ordinance wherein the threatening is more expressed and in reference to which the judgment hath been more severely and some way indifferently inflicted? as is clear, whether we read before or after the words of the text: And there is good reason for it; For, 1. If the duty be more solemn, if the presence in it be more gracious, and the bounty that flows in it be more abundant, then sure the sin of abusing, or of unbecoming going about it, must be the greater. 2. If we look to the sin not only in respect of its greatness in several other respects, but in respect of the nature of it, 'tis a more direct disrespect put upon, and despite done in some respect even unto Christ; 'tis to be guilty of the Body and Blood of the Lord; 'tis as if the spear had been in such a man's hand that pierced Christ's side, and as if he had driven by his own hand the nails thorow his hands and feet: The reason is, because Christ in this ordinance brings himself and his death so very near, that the sinner is put to it in a special manner, either to receive him, or to refuse and reject him; and when he refuses and rejects him, he thereby practically says, that he makes very little or no account of him at all, and that, if he had been living in those days when he was crucified, he would also have joined with the multitude, and cried, "Away with him:" Thus such an one "crucifieth the Son of God afresh, and puts him to an open shame." O hainous and horrid guilt.

The first Use serves to alarm you, That, if the fear of sin will not prevail with you, the fear of judgment, of God's curse and wrath, and of the vengeance of the Mediator (represented in this Ordinance very clearly, as crucified, and bleeding out his precious life for sinners) here, and eternally hereafter, may prevail with you to be serious in the work ye are now called to.

Let me (which is a Second and more particular Use of the Doctrine,) advise you, as to examine yourselves seriously in reference to all your other ways, so to take a special look of your bygone communicating: O that many of you who are so whole at the heart, that there is no

provoking nor awakning of you, and who are so senseless, that yescare at nothing, could be prevailed with to charge yourselves with this horrid sin of being guilty of the Body and Blood of the Lord, that thereby ye may be awakned! It will certainly one day awake you; therefore, in your self-examination, take special notice; If ye have communicated unworthily, make special addresses to God for removing of this dreadful guilt, and have a special eye for the time to come that ye fall not in it: I say again, take a special review of your bygone carriage in this Ordinance, and say to yourselves, Whether are we guilty of this sin? and whether are we in hazard to fall into it of new? And, to stir you up to this, consider, 1. What temporal strokes from God have come or may come for it: Who knows but our outward captivity, the blood that hath been shed, the many new and unheard-of, or but very little heard-of diseases that are among us, have in a great part been for this sin? 2. Know, that, beside temporal strokes on the outward man, ye may fall under spiritual plagues: The Lord may blast the Ordinances for the time to come, that they shall do you no good; and he may blast any parts and gifts that ye have; he may make your ears dull of hearing, and your eyes blind, and your hearts fat: And, if ye quench any convictions that ye may possibly be under for the time, it may be that ye shall never be privileged with such convictions again, nor be brought so near heaven hereafter; but more delusion and seduction by error, more prophanity, security, hypocrisy and presumption may break in among you: And tho' these be not thought much of now by some at least, but lookt at as very light things, yet the day will come when they will be found to be insupportably heavy; and men will be put rather to wish, that this house, wherein we now are, had fallen on them and bruised them, or that the sword had fallen in upon them and slain them, than to ly under such a weight. 3. Know, that it may bring on eternal judgment: and O but this will draw deep on the score of many professors, even the abuse of the Lord's Table, in partaking of his Table, and of the table of devils! I shall name but a few sins here, that ye would notice and try yourselves in as to this: 1st, Ye have often communicate, have ye also often examined yourselves? Can many of you pitch on such an hour or half-hour, that ye set apart to try your soul's condition? 2dly, I would ask, What repent-

ance hath there been? Right examination makes discovery of guilt, and discovery of guilt brings out repentance, which hath some pricking and soul-panging with it. 3dly, What effect hath followed? what engagements have been kept? how have many of us reformed our walk? is not our carriage as it was? passion and pride as quick and lively as they had wont to be? deadness, security and worldly-mindedness as they were before? Are we not as little self-denied, as unready to forgive, as ignorant, and having as little knowledge of gospel-mysteries as we were, and had many a year since? But very few can say on good grounds that they have made any progress in mortification and holiness; and, except it be some conviction, some flash of affection, or some faint resolutions to amend things amiss, what use hath been made of, or what benefit hath been reaped by many, and that not of the worst sort, by the Communion? And therefore, in the next place, let me say, That it were not unbecoming or unsuitable to the Communion, to make this night a night of humiliation before God, and of prayer to him to be delivered from blood-guiltiness; there is not a more legible evidence of our untenderness, than our being little pricked at the heart for this sin: A word of reflection from our neighbour, or the apprehension of some great man's displeasure and feud, hath lien nearer our hearts, than the wronging of the Son of God at this rate, hath done; for which it were good now to cast an eye to "look to him, and to mourn as one mourneth for his only son: and to go to Zion weeping as we go, asking the way thitherward." These are no uncouth nor strange things, but such as are ordinarily prest upon us. We are afraid that many have lothed and left the simple way of godliness, to get and look after some shining and glistering thing to the eye; and that way will never profit them. Take a serious look of your soul's condition, and be in good earnest in the exercise of repentance, as the life of your preparation; even that ye may come, knowing well what ye need, and what ye are to receive if ye come aright.

The THIRD and main Use is, That, seeing there is so great ground to fear Communicating unworthily, and that so great judgments follow upon it, it would be, as our fear to Communicate unworthily, so our uptaking business, how we may Communicate worthily: This is the end of the day, and should be our task and work this night, even to endea-

our to be worthy communicants to-morrow. Ye will readily ask, How is such a frame to be attained and come by? I would, for answer, desire you seriously to mind what ye have heard on these words, 'Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat;' which comprehend the sum of what is called for from you: And we shall now add these Four things, that, in your preparing yourselves to Communicate rightly and worthily, ye would seriously mind:

1. A right up-taking of yourselves.
2. A right up-taking of the Ordinance.
3. A right acting in reference to both.
4. A right manner of acting, or a right frame in your going about the work.

For the First, We say, There would be a right up-taking of ourselves, that we may know what we are, what are our sins, spiritual wants and necessities, that we may have some distinct errand to God: This is implied in these words, 'Let a man examine himself;' that he may be well acquainted with himself. If there be not some time taken for attaining to a right consideration of ourselves, we cannot come rightly to this Ordinance; or if any word come that suits our condition, it will come by guess as to us, and we may come to the Communion, and neither know what we need, nor what we are seeking or would be at.

For the Second, we say, There would be a right uptaking of the Ordinance itself, which, when wanting, it mars us, that we know not how to Communicate: In the Ordinance we would take up the substance of it, the end of it, and how it effectuates the end. 1st, The substance of the Ordinance is Christ Jesus himself, who, tho' he be not bodily, yet is he really present in the Sacrament: His words are not empty words, the signs are not empty signs; but the bread is his Body, and the wine is his Blood: For if there be a presence in the Word, as he makes it known through his Spirit, by the efficacy of it on the heart; then, in a more special and solemn manner, there is a presence in the Sacrament, which also he makes sensible to the spiritual senses of the believer. 2dly, The end and use the Ordinance, for which God hath appointed it, would also be rightly taken up; and this is large: It serves for the manifesting of his love in his death till he come again; and this would be a piece of your exercise, to discover the love of Christ in it, and to put your faith to exercise on that love. In which respect, Christians have not only their particular

case to look to in the sacrament, but also that their spirits be taken up with the thoughts of the wonderfully condescending love of Christ, who hath given and left behind him a token and memorial of it. And especially these ends would be looked to and considered, viz. That 'tis given for instruction, for it gives us a sight of Christ crucified; it shews us the way of making up our union with him, and the necessity of it, and the warrant given us to make use of him. And as 'tis given for instruction and teaching, so for sealing and confirming; the Lord would have us thereby knowing the truth of his promises and covenant for our greater consolation, and that we may with the greater liberty apply them: Even as when a prince offers peace to a rebel, and grants him a pardon, to make him the more sure, and to remove all doubts and jealousies, there is a seal appended to the pardon, which confirms it, and consequently strengthneth the faith of the rebel to rest upon it; so this a special end of the Sacrament, to seal and confirm: God having graciously condescended to covenant and promise, and to swear to the truth of his covenant and promise, 'that the heirs of promise may have strong consolation;' he also appends seals to his covenant. But, 3dly, We are to consider how it effectuates these ends: And thus we are to look on the Sacrament as exhibiting and applying Jesus Christ and his benefits; which must needs be a spiritual and sublime thing, holden out in these words, 'Take ye, eat ye, this is my body.' &c. Where we have Jesus Christ giving over himself to the believer, so as he and the believer become one, and he hath Christ to feed upon. 'Tis true, there is no physical conjunction here: Yet as, in the Word, the offer and promises convey Christ holden out in the promises to the soul, being received by faith, there is an union thus made up betwixt Christ and the person; so, in the right partaking of the Sacrament, the Spirit going along with the Word and Seal, and the believer receiving the Seal as given him of God for that end, as well as the Word, there results an union and communion, a mystical and spiritual uniting and joining of Christ and the believer together; which, altho' it doth not always necessarily pre-suppose faith going before, yet it supposes faith necessarily to go along with it: And in this there is most expresse covenanting and bargaining betwixt Christ and the believer, Jesus Christ not giving him-

self here indefinitely, as he doth in the word and offer of the Gospel, but particularly; and thus the believer's faith hath the most distinct ground and reason to make application of him, and so the more distinct confirmation.

For the THIRD, There is a right acting in reference to both the former to be looked to. 1st, There is something that our judgment and memory would be taken up with, which is as the key to what follows: We are to remember the Lord's death; the end of it, the love he had in dying, and his instituting of this Ordinance when he died for this end, that we might remember his death and love therein till he come again, and have our minds meditating on these. 2dly, There would be the exercise of our graces, as of repentance, from reflecting on ourselves; of love, from looking to Christ, and of continued spiritual mourning, resulting from both: And especially there would be the exercise of faith, as being the main thing that on our part makes up the union, and whereby our communion is entertained. And there is a Threefold act of faith called for in worthy communicating: 1. An act receiving. 2. An act giving. 3. A ratifying act, that knits both the acts together. (1.) I say, an act of faith receiving Christ's word and ordinance, and himself therein. (2.) An act of faith giving, resigning or committing ourselves to him: The covenant being in this respect mutual. And, (3.) A ratifying act, coupling or knitting these together, viz. Christ giving himself to us, and our giving ourselves to him; his engagement to us, and ours to him. To clear these a little further, 1. The receiving act of faith looks to the institution and covenant to which the Sacrament is appended, and to Christ, in the words of institution and in the covenant, making offer of himself, which is to be considered as in the Word and Covenant, to which the Sacrament is appended: And accordingly it welcometh him, as it doth in the Word; for, as there is a receiving act of faith as to the Word, so there is a receiving act of faith as to the Sacrament: That is, when the soul is put to dispute, whether about the offer of it be made to it, or about the Promise that supposes the condition, if it may lay hold upon it; the believing soul's taking of the Sacrament is the permitting and allowing of itself to be confirmed, by virtue of Christ's appointing that Ordinance for its com-

firmation, that the offer is made to it, and that the Promise belongs to it in particular: As when a penitent sinner comes to the Communion, and that Promise rolls in his thoughts, 'Thy sins and thy iniquities will I remember no more;' and he would fain believe it; the receiving act of faith is to take the Sacrament as God's putting his seal to that word of promise, that he will make it good to the soul in particular, 'Thy sins and thy iniquities will I remember no more.' Or when a soul hath its secret longing after Christ, and cannot dispense with the want of him, and cries out, 'O! when wilt thou come unto me?' In the Sacrament it looks on the institution, and takes it as a seal of confirmation to put it out of question, that he that hath promised to come, 'will come, and will not tarry;' and it looks on Christ giving the Communion, as if it saw him taking the pen, and with his own hand subscribing the contract, and lays it up in its heart as in a charter-chest, as an evidence and confirmation of its right to Christ. And indeed there is much need of being distinct in this; for there are many who make conscience of engaging to Christ in this ordinance, who look not on it as Christ's engaging to them; but the receiving act of faith looks on it immediately as his engaging to the soul: As a person that hath a hard heart, looking on that promise, 'I will take away the stony heart, and give a heart of flesh;' and, expecting the making out of it, takes the Sacrament as a seal that he will perform that promise, because he articles so with him to get that promise made good; even as a man, that would have some debateable clause in his right to such a piece of land cleared and put out of question, brings it to his superior to get it sealed of new: Now this receiving act of faith doth not only dispose and fit us to receive from God; but as the hand takes or receives the elements, so faith receives God's offer of the Covenant, and that which is represented and sealed up in that Ordinance.

2. The act of faith giving, is (as I said) that whereby we give ourselves away to Christ: and so, as we get one right, we give (as it were) another; or, as we take one hand, we give another: We receive Christ engaged to us according to the Covenant, and we engage and give ourselves away to be his. Our very receiving supposeth our consenting, and faith's delivering and giving up itself or the person to Christ, and taking Christ to it, or to himself, so

making (as it were) an exchange. (O wonderful exchange, by which we receive infinitely more and better than we give!) when the soul hath gotten him, it gives itself to him, to be changed and made better; and renews its purposes, resolutions and promises to that end, and takes the Sacrament to make these sure and secure. 3. The ratifying act of faith is this, when we have taken Christ's promise by faith, and have given our promise to him, and surrendered and delivered up ourselves unto him, and we go about the Communion, and exercise our faith to get both confirmed; as we use to speak, 'We will take our Sacrament on it;' we take the Communion to seal his part of the Covenant to us, and to confirm ourselves as to the performance of that which we have engaged to him; and thus that which was before a bond on Christ's side, and a bond and engagement on our side, becomes now a mutual contract and bargain; both are put in one, and complicated together, sealed with one seal, and made use of for both these ends: The believer thinks himself surer of God's promise, and himself more securely engaged to God; and tho' this engaging hath no new promise with it, yet thereby the more explicitly is our duty brought forth, and the promise more particularly becomes ours.

As for the Fourth and last thing, It is a right manner of acting, or a right way and suitable frame in our going about this Ordinance; which takes in several things, as, 1. Fear, because it is a very difficult thing rightly to Communicate, and we had need to fear lest we mistake and miscarry. 2. Distinctness and clearness, which is a part of the result of self-examination: We would at least be so far clear in our condition, as to know and be convinced that the general strain of our way hath not been right as it should have been by very far, when we cannot so well find out and condescend upon the particular evils that we have been given to, or have done; and tho' we know not all nor many of the particular promises of the Covenant, yet we would be clear in that general, that in the Covenant God maketh over himself a God all-sufficient to the believer. 3. Faith in, and dependence on God for preparation, and for a suitable frame, for gaining new ground of corruptions, for more humility and tenderness, for more thorow turning to the Lord: 'Convert me, (says Ephraim, Jer. xxxi.)

and I shall be converted' There would be many serious and sincere resolutions, engagements, and purposes, and much heart-melting, and prayer in the making of them; as it was with Israel and Judah, Jer. l. 5. whose great desire and design was, to have the covenant betwixt God and them so secured, that it might hold perpetually, and never any more be forgotten; they desired to keep (as we use to speak) no hank in their own hand, they allow of no reservations or exceptions, and they go about this great work praying and weeping: This were a sweet and suitable frame for a Communion, and notably well becoming a people that approach to the Lord's table; and we seriously commend it to you, and you to the grace of God in the practice of these things, which his own blessed Self make forthcoming to you.

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S E R M O N II.

A Preparation-Sermon for the COMMUNION,

On 1 Cor. xi. 29. *Not discerning the Lord's Body.*

IT is a very great and grave, a very momentuous and concerning work, rightly to partake of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper; it hath as many and great advantages attending the due and worthy participation thereof, and as many sad consequences following the unworthy participation of it, as any other of all the Ordinances of Christ hath: And therefore, when the apostle hath sharply expostulated with the Christian Corinthians for several abuses in reference to this Ordinance, he proceeds, after a full declaration of its institution, to guard them against all after abuse thereof, and to fit and prepare them for suitable and worthy Communicating; and the First direction that he gives them is in reference to the preceeding preparation, "Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat:" The second is in reference to the action itself, teaching them to communicate worthily, so as they may discern the Lord's Body, by holding out the danger of unworthy communicating: Both which he knits together, telling them, that if any of these things be wanting, it will

bring on judgment. Whence in a word, and but in passing, we may observe these two things. 1. That a man will never communicate worthily, that doth not beforehand endeavour to prepare himself for it; and therefore he prefixeth this, "Let a man examine himself," and then subjoins, "And so let him eat." 2. That a man that is not distinct in discerning himself in some measure after the examination of himself, will never aright discern the Lord's Body in this Ordinance of the Communion: He that takes not up himself, will never take up Christ rightly.

In the words more particularly we have Three great things in reference to present communicating: The first whereof is, the great and peculiar use of the Communion, and that is, that it makes the Lord's body discernible, it puts Christ in a capacity (to speak so) to be taken up and discerned: The Second is, the great duty of a worthy Communicant, and that is, rightly to discern the Lord's Body, so holden forth: The Third is, the great sin that unworthy Communicants fall into, and that is, They do not discern the Lord's Body; but are like so many dogs and swine, who not knowing what delicacies are there, they go about the action, not knowing what they are doing.

The First is clear, That, in the Sacrament, Christ Jesus his broken Body is made discernible to us; else he would not find fault with them who come, and do not discern it. The words also before, ver. 24. clear it; "This (saith he) is my Body which is broken for you:" So Chap. x. 16. "The Cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the Communion of the Blood of Christ? And the Bread which we break, is it not the Communion of the Body of Christ?" And the sharp judgments that come on people for not discerning the Lord's Body, and so for being guilty of Communicating unworthily, do shew, that not only is our Lord's Body really present, but in a special manner discernible in this Ordinance.

To clear this a little further, we shall, 1. Premit a twofold distinction; and then, 2. Answer a few questions that serve for clearing the doctrine, and for better uptaking of this Ordinance.

FIRST then, We would distinguish betwixt these two, viz. Looking on the Sacrament as strictly taken, and as contradistinguished from the word; and looking on it as more complexly taken, as including the word. It is in the

last sense that we consider the Sacrament here, viz. as taking in, 1. Christ, signified and represented by the elements. 2. The word and covenant, to which the Sacrament as a seal is appended; therefore the Cup is called, "The Cup of the New Testament." 3. The Seal of the Sacrament itself, appended to the Word and Covenant.

2. We would distinguish betwixt Christ's broken Body considered as discernible to our understanding only, and the same considered as it is discernible to our very senses, or as it is apprehensible, when by feeling we may grip it as it were, and not only look to it, but take hold of it: (how this is, shall be more particularly explained and cleared afterward for preventing of mistakes.) It is in this last sense that we understand discernible here, not excluding the former; so that Christ's broken Body in the Sacrament is not only made discernible to the understanding of the right Communicant, but he is made communicable and apprehensible, and there is an union with him attainable in that Ordinance: And what we said before proves this; he holds out his Body to be received, and he is received in it.

As for the Second, to wit, the Questions to be answered; they are these Four. 1. In what respect is Christ present and discernible in the Sacrament? 2. To what is he made discernible and communicable? 3. How the Sacrament makes him discernible, and what way it holds him out as discernible to us? 4. What may be the reasons why Christ holds out himself, his broken Body, as discernible to us in the Sacrament?

1st, then, In what respect is Christ present and discernible in the Sacrament? We answer, 1. Not simply considered as he is the Son of God, nor in respect of any benefit from him as Mediator, neither simply as Redeemer; but he is holden out as incarnate; and for this Sacrament differs from the Jews Passover, which held him out as to come, while this holds him out as come. 2. It holds him out, not only as become Man, but as suffering, as having his Body broken. 3. He is made discernible in respect of the end for which he suffered, and had his Body broken, and his Blood shed: "This is (saith he) my Body which is broken for you; this Cup is the New Testament in my Blood, shed for the remission of the sins of many:" to wit, of all the elect: It holds out Christ-Mediator, God-Man suffering for us. 4. It holds him out as communicable,

and in capacity to be participate of by us; therefore 'tis called "the Communion of his Body," Chap. x. 16. to tell us, that we may be united to him, and made to share of him; and we are bidden Take and Eat, and All to Drink of it. These last two look to the Covenant, and hold out the Sacrament in reference to it, and how our Lord Jesus, first by his sufferings was to purchase a people to him self, and secondly that he was to be communicable to his people; therefore the Cup is called "the New Covenant in his Blood:" The Cup and Covenant go together; for tho' we may consider Christ without the Sacrament, yet we cannot so well consider the Sacrament without Christ and the Covenant.

2dly, To what is Christ made discernible and communicable? We answer, 1. He is not discernible nor present after a corporal manner to the bodily eye, tho' he be really and truly present: The Bread that he gives is his Body, and the Cup his Blood; and yet it was bread and wine which was given, and not his Body and Blood corporally. 2. He is not present and communicable by any local mutation, by taking us up to heaven to him, or by bringing his Body out of heaven to us; but he is these three ways present and communicable, (1.) To our spiritual senses, to an enlightned understanding, which considers Christ's body broken, and his blood shed. (2.) To the faith of his people he is present in his own Ordinance: When his Spirit goes along, and quickens their hearts, and their faith is in exercise, they are made to apprehend Christ's body, and to have an union with him sitting in glory, as really as they partake of the elements with their hand, and feed upon them with their mouth and stomach; an union as real as is betwixt the head and the members, and betwixt the root and the branches: These two, the Spirit on Christ's side, and Faith on our side, make up a real union; and therefore, tho' this presence be real, yet 'tis spiritual: Faith, looking and going thorow the elements, takes up Christ according to the end appointed, and this makes the union: Even as faith will look and go thorow the word, and, crediting the word, takes up Christ in it, and makes an union with him; so, by virtue of this Ordinance, there is a spiritual presence of and union with Christ Jesus (3.) A presence to sense, not so much in respect of inward feeling, as in respect of the powerful effects of his presence, tho' often

inward feeling goes alongst with it; and therefore 'tis called "the Communion of his Body;" and "the Wine of heaven:" And in respect of the mean and way he manifests himself therein, to the eye, to the touch, to the taste, and to the ear; and there is a colour sensible: Which is more than is in any other ordinance, where there is but the exercise of one sense; for, the more of the outward senses he makes use of, he brings with him a proportionable blessing to the inward senses of the soul.

3dly, How doth the Sacrament hold out Christ as discernible to us? For answer, I shall offer these Four ways, how he may be present to the faith of the believer, in the Sacrament; all which ways he is made discernible: 1. In respect of the institution; for Christ is here represented by the minister as giving himself; his authority and warrant is here, therefore himself is here: This, tho' it be common to all Christ's Ordinances, yet it belongs in a peculiar way to this Ordinance; for in it he is present in a special manner, making over himself and his sufferings to us. 2. He is made discernible in the Sacrament, in as far as it represents him: And tho' the Word hold Him out, yet the Sacrament doth so, more fully, clearly and sensibly, by such and such signs; by Bread, and Bread broken, representing his Body broken by suffering; by Wine, and Wine poured out, representing his Blood shed; and by Wine distinct from the Bread, to shew a most true and real death: In which respect, 'tis said, "Do this in remembrance of me:" and, "As often as ye eat this Bread, and drink this Cup, ye shew forth the Lord's death till he come again." Every Sacrament represents Christ, but this represents him in his suffering and dying, and in the end of it, and makes it over to the worthy Communicant. 3. He is made discernible by this Sacrament, in this respect, as 'tis a seal appended and affixed to the Covenant, serving to ratify and confirm the promises contained in the Covenant; and so the bread and wine, considered in reference to the institution, are a real confirmation of our real partaking of the thing signified, and in some respect make Christ really present: As the giving of a sealed charter of a house to a man, is the giving him the house; or, as the giving of investment by a bit of earth or stone (being a legal confirmation) is the giving of that land to the man, wherein he is invest; because (as I said) 'tis a legal right to

it, and makes it present and discernible to him: Even so, Christ is made discernible in this Ordinance, because we have our right to him, which is in the word, in a special manner confirmed to us in it; for not only doth this (as other Sacraments do) confirm the Word and Covenant in general, but it hath this peculiar to it, that it confirms Christ's making over his dying self to us. - 4. Christ is here present and discernible, and made so by this Ordinance, if we consider the Sacrament as a mean whereby we have Christ communicate to us: He not only makes over himself covenant-wise, but sealeth this gift; and the Sacrament is a mean of communion with him thus made over to us: In which respect, the believer doth and may warrantably make use of the Sacrament for his quickning, elevating, and strengthening to cleave closer, and to grip faster to Christ: for which cause, 'tis called, 'The communion of his Body:' and hereby we are said to be made 'one Body with him:' Not but that without the Sacrament it may be and is often so; but by the Sacrament this union and communion is strengthened and furthered to the faith and spiritual sense of the believer.

4thly, What are the reasons why Christ will have his broken Body made thus discernible and apprehensible in this Sacrament? We answer, That he will have it so for these reasons, 1. For evidencing of, and bearing testimony to, his great love to his people: It says that a dying Christ so loves us, that he gave himself to us; and so the memory of his death is revived and kept up: He will have his dying Self in a Sacrament bestowed on his people to keep his love still fresh to them in their remembrance. 2. For the public professing and testifying our faith in a dying Saviour: For in this Sacrament we profess our faith in him, and dependence on him; and we say thereby, and declare to the world, This my Saviour died, and is able to give me life, which is a piece of honour and glory to the Mediator, and a part of our duty, when we give public testimony, that we think no shame of a crucified Redeemer. 3. The Lord hath, for the edification and benefit of his people, made himself so discernible in this Sacrament; and there is a Fourfold edification or benefit that redounds to them by it. (1.) Instruction: for they that cannot so well take up the Lord in the Word, may be somewhat helped to take him up in the Sacrament as a slain Saviour, and as being as

needful as meat and drink, without which, as we cannot live, no more can we live without him: And O how many spiritual lessons may be had by these significant ceremonies instituted by Christ! (2.) There is here edification unto the faith of God's people: And thus it becomes strengthening, when not only Christ says in his Word, "I have loved my Church, and given myself for her:" and, "They that believe shall not perish:" but we have this Ordinance sealing this. 'Tis exceeding strengthening to a poor weak doubting body, which could not easily believe that Christ would be so kind to a rebel; when he gets a sacred seal of his kindness it helps to believe what is promised. 3. It edifies, as it serveth to promote the inward growth of grace: For, in the Sacrament, Christ is communicate; and, as he is communicate, life is communicate, love to God, and to one another, is communicate: And, in a word, we cannot imagine a communication of Christ, but it brings with it strengthening to the inward man. 4. There is edification in respect of the believer's consolation, whether as to his sense, or as to his faith: The gospel in its offer and promises comes out, and says, Men and women, be it known to you, that Christ is preached to you, and remission of sins thorow him; but the Sacrament says, Believing man and woman, there is my Body not only broken for all the elect in general, but for thee in particular: And this much silenceth the great debate whether I be elected or not, or within the covenant, or not; for it says, O man, here is a slain and broken Redeemer made over unto thee, upon condition that thou close with him in the covenant, as he offers himself: and so, when there has been some wavering and fainting in respect of consolation before, it proves very strengthening of the believer's consolation, considering the nature of the Ordinance; and, in this respect, the Sacrament is as a love-token of a kind husband to his spouse, who, when he is to remove to some considerable distance from her for a time, says, Take and keep this in remembrance of me, and think that I dearly love thee, and will not forget thee, till we meet again.

The Second point of doctrine is the great duty called for from a worthy Communicant; and that in short is, rightly to discern the Lord's Body made so discernible, and as he is made discernible. The text confirms the doctrine: For, tho' a man had never so many good things; suppose that

he had not only gifts, but grace, yea and a holy frame of spirit; yet, if he be ignorant of what he is called to, or ~~a~~ doing in this ordinance, he cannot discern the Lord's Body, and so cannot communicate worthily: Hence it is, that there is so much need of knowledge, without which a man can no more than a child or a fool rightly take up Christ in the Sacrament.

To open this a little, we shall speak a word to these three, 1. To the Object to be discerned. 2. To the act of discerning. 3. To the reasons why this discerning is so necessary a duty.

1st, For the Object to be discerned: it is Christ Jesus suffering, dying, and making over himself to his people according to his covenant; 'tis Christ, and yet Christ dying, and Christ dying according to the covenant, from which he can never be separated: And especially in this Ordinance in particular, considered with its end and institution with respect to the covenant, 'tis Christ giving himself, and in this Sacrament, according to the covenant.

2dly, For the act of discerning; it is taken Four ways, the last whereof is the main. 1. To discern a thing, in Scripture, is to have distinct thoughts and apprehensions concerning it; 'tis to take up a thing simply and as it is in itself: Thus, to discern Christ present in the Sacrament, is to discern how and wherefore he is present. 2. To discern a thing, is to difference it from other things; and, in this respect, a thing is said to be discerned comparatively, as 1 Cor. iv. 7. 'Who maketh thee to differ from another?' Thus, to discern this Sacrament, and Christ in it, is to difference it from other things; considering that it was once common bread and wine, but that now it is not so: It is to put a difference betwixt the Sacrament and common bread and wine; and betwixt the Sacrament and the Word and Covenant, yet with respect to the Covenant, as the seals differ from the charter; and to difference this Sacrament from other Sacraments, in respect that it looks to a dying Saviour, and communicates him and his benefits that way. 3. To discern a thing, is to have a high esteem of it; such as was the discerning of meats, days, and places: So to discern Christ in this Ordinance, is to have a deep impression and high estimation of Jesus Christ, of his death, and of his matchless love shining therein; to have much spirituality, holy fear, awe and reverence in reference to

him: Such a fear and reverence as mean men will have before a king or a great man, who when they carry not suitably before such a great person, we will say to them, Know ye where you are? So the right discerning and up-taking of Christ here, is to have a high estimation of him.

4. There is a complex discerning of a thing in reference to its use and end: Or we may call it a relative discerning, which is practical, when a man conforms himself suitably to his discerning of the thing; the want whereof our Lord reproves in the Jews, "Hypocrites, (says he) ye can discern the face of the sky, but ye cannot discern the signs of the times." And, in this respect also, when a man carries unsuitably before a magistrate, 'tis said to him by discerning persons, Know ye where you are? And, this being the main thing here implied, we shall speak a little more to it, wherein these Two things are supposed: (1.) Some distinct uptaking of ourselves, of our need, and of our hazard.

(2.) The right uptaking of Christ in this Ordinance, as to the supply of those necessities, and preventing of that hazard. And this Doctrinal discerning goeth before that which is Practical, which is a man's suitable use-making of Christ, or suitably exercising himself in reference to his need, and that Ordinance appointed for supply of his need by Jesus Christ; which is with a reflex look, sometimes on himself, sometimes on Christ. And there are in this these Five steps, which follow one of them upon another. 1. It consists in a suitable frame of heart, as becomes such a poor, sinful, unworthy and needy person in the presence of so holy a Lord, going about such a holy action; another frame than is called for at our dinner or supper, or at ordinary hearing the word, or at prayer: A holy, humble, cheerful, serious, heavenly and hungry frame: Holy awe and respect to God, making humble; faith of God's goodness and rich grace in Christ shining in this Ordinance, making cheerful; the conviction of need, making sober, and yet very serious and eager in what he is about. 'Tis a frame made up, as it were, of contrarieties; ardent love and zeal, and yet a calm and composed spirit to hear what God says, to take what he gives, and to behold what he manifests. 2. It consists in an exercise of the mind in meditation, both in reference to ourselves and to Christ: Meditation in reference to our own sinfulness and misery, and meditation on Christ's love, calling to mind all that he hath done, thinking with

delight on Christ's suffering, and on the end of it; and again reflecting a look on ourselves, to keep life in this meditation, What was I when he suffered and did all this for me? and what am I now, when he is offering this to me? To have the picture of a loving husband hanging by a wife, to what purpose is it, and for what use doth it serve, if she never look on it to mind him whom it represents? 3. It consists in an exercise of graces, 'tis even (as it is said in the Song,) a making of all the Spices to cast forth their smell; and the putting of all things in good order, and studying to have them in good case: 'Tis to have love warm to the Giver, and closing with the gift of a dying Saviour; and to have love warm to others of his people for his sake, and because he hath taken us in with others, to partake of the benefits of his love shining in his death: For love to the Head and members go together. 'Tis to have repentance lively stirred up, and sin made heart-pricking, and godly sorrow to flow; the heart made to lothe sin, and the mind exercised in forming hearty resolutions, purposes, vows and engagements against it. But 'tis especially to have faith stirred up and in exercise, and to have all the senses of faith (to speak so) set agoing: As, when the word comes out, and says, "Take ye, eat ye; this is my Body which is broken for you:" faith beholds and gets as clear and satisfying a view of Christ's suffering and dying, as if the man saw him with his bodily eyes: When the hand is stretched out to take, faith acts proportionably, in stretching out its hand to take Christ; and not only grips him, but in this Ordinance, and according to the end of it, takes it as a pledge of Christ performing what he hath promised, making use of him for the end appointed: When the eye looks on what is done, faith is considering and taking a view of Christ, and of the covenant, and of the benefits purchased by him; and sees another thing than the elements, even the wakned-up sword of the Father's justice pursuing the Mediator, as the elects Cautioner: When the eye looks on the distribution, faith sees Christ made as it were believers Common-good given among them, and to every one of them: When the hand puts the bread and wine to the mouth, faith hath a way of opening its mouth, and (as it were) chewing and feeding upon Jesus Christ, and of strengthening, refreshing, and cheering itself in him; counting itself well come to with him, and secure in

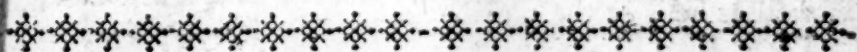
him; and fastning its engagements to him: All which strengthen our spiritual life, as eating and drinking doth the natural life. And then, when it comes to the taste, Christ relisheth most sweetly to the believer, so that no wine doth cheer the natural heart so much as Christ in the Sacrament, considered in his love and covenant, and in the benefits that come by him, does the soul of the believer; faith here considers Christ not only as communicable, but as actually communicated. The Fourth thing wherein this discerning consists, is a reflecting exercise: When we have received the Sacrament, we are to reflect and consider what we have done, and what we are doing: Are we indeed feeding upon Christ? What is this in our hands? This bread in some respect is not bread, but Christ: This cup is not wine, but "the Cup of the New Testament in his Blood:" And, by this reflex act, the believer applies, and confirms himself; having received the Sacrament, whereby his union with Christ is signified and sealed up, he applies, and says within himself, Now Christ is mine, and I am his: And he confirms himself in Christ's love to himself, and in his interest in him: Now, saith he, I have gotten no delusion but the sign and seal of his blessed Body broken, and of his Blood shed for me. If unbelief say, Have ye gotten Christ indeed? Yes, says the believer's faith, having received this pledge of his love, I have gotten himself, and I should believe it: And this is to act on Christ, not only directly, which is a thing common to the Sacrament with the Word; but to act on Christ reflexly, and to persuade ourselves of our union and communion with him, which is the end of this Ordinance; else we take not up Christ as giving a seal: Therefore the word is, "Take, eat, this is my Body broken for you:" there is more than a bare sign here: And faith acts, not only for receiving, but for confirming itself, that by receiving it hath an union and communion with him, who is holden out in the Sacrament; for, if it be a seal, and exhibite Christ as a seal, then faith should receive and act on it as such, for attaining the end that a seal should have, supposing the condition to proceed. 5. It consists in an act of spiritual affecting, when there is a holy smacking (to speak so) and kissing of Christ, the soul digesting him for the life of the inner-man, and thereon delighting, rejoicing, and exulting in him: And so the faith, confidence and hope of the believer are strengthened; which makes him that he is not

ashamed, and upon the back of this ordinarily the love of God is shed abroad in the heart: And tho' there should be little sensible feeling, yet the believer finds himself obliged to cheer himself in Christ, and in the covenant, and in the benefits that he hath thro' his purchase; and there is readily some warming of love to Christ, and he is confirmed in the faith of the love of Christ to him: And it is impossible, where these two are, but some holy tickling of affections, which flow from the word, and from this Ordinance thus rightly gone about (as has been said) will follow; and if this be not, that is, if Christ be not thus discerned in the Sacrament, (1.) God gets not what he calls for, Christ's death is not rightly minded, his glory and our edification are not promoted: Nor, 2. Is the end of the Sacrament attained: Neither, 3. Is the end of the Sacrament attained: Neither, 3. Is our comfort furthered: For it is not the Ordinance barely, or ordinary bread and wine set apart for a holy use, but Jesus Christ discerned and received in the Ordinance, that comforts; otherwise, the Ordinance in and by itself will not promote our comfort and growth.

The Third Doctrine is, That it is, tho' a very common and rife, yet a very great sin, not to discern the Lord's Body, as he is holden out in this Sacrament discernible. The greatness of which may be easily gathered from what we have discoursed concerning the great privilege of the discernibleness of the Lord's Body therein; from the horridness of the guilt that it involves in, even the guilt of the Body and Blood of the Lord, the greatest and most horrid of all blood-guiltiness; and from the dreadful judgments and plagues that follow on it, temporal or bodily, and spiritual plagues, yea, even eternal damnation, if repentance through grace prevent not. But we must, because of the shortness of time, leave all that might be spoken in the more particular prosecution of this doctrine; and shall only give you two or three caveats (wherewith I shall close) to guard against mistakes in reference to what hath been spoken. I know it will readily be said, If this be discerning of the Lord's Body, and if none other do discern it but such as go about these things, it will be hard for any to discern it. For answer to this, I would have you to consider, 1. That there is a more explicite, distinct and perfect discerning; and a more implicate, confused and indistinct discerning of

the Lord's Body: If we speak of perfection in discerning, who come up to that? but if we speak of an honest sincere way of aiming to discern, tho' it be somewhat indistinct and confused, that may be won at; yea, I would not think them in a good condition that rest satisfied with themselves, as being distinct enough in all these things whereof we have spoken: Yet, where there is (as I just now said) honest aiming at these things, tho' in a confused and indistinct way; where faith and love are in some measure acting, with a sort of fear and joy mixed together; when there is a fear to profane the Ordinance, and yet the soul loves it so well, that it cannot endure to want it, nor Christ in it; there is a discerning of the Lord's Body, that warrants to draw near. 2. Consider, that there is a general confusion, and a particular confusion (to speak so) in going about this Ordinance: The general confusion is this, when persons are so very ignorant and confused, that they know not at all what they are doing; a particular confusion is only in some respect that is, when a soul knoweth that Jesus Christ is in the Ordinance, and knoweth its own condition to stand in need of him, that it hath many spiritual wants to be supplied; and that there is much good and a supply of all those wants to be had from Christ in this Ordinance; but how to come at it thereby, it knows not so well nor so distinctly: A person that is confused in the general, cannot discern the Lord's Body in the Sacrament; but one that is confused in a particular, may: And tho' such an one cannot, it may be, pitch on a particular promise that suits his need, yet he may fix on Christ, and on the covenant in general, which is one of the main things that faith acts on; and indeed, unless himself be acted on by faith, his benefits fail: And tho' a serious soul cannot get a particular promise to settle on, we say it should stick by the covenant in general, as including all particulars. 3. Consider, that discerning is not to be astricted to the very instant of receiving, but we would look well what is our aim and endeavour amongst the action; and, if habitually we be indeed seriously seeking after and pursuing these things, we cannot have them all in our thoughts at once; that is scarce, if at all, possible: But if the aim and strain of your souls exercise run this way, and tho' there be failing in many things, yet this is not a neglective slighting and careless inconsideration. In a word, see if there hath been, 1. Some clear

conviction of sin, and of your great need of Christ. And, 2. See if there hath been some uptaking of Christ in the Ordinance, and he made precious and lovely therein in some measure; and that it was your errand, in going to that Ordinance, to take Christ to supply your need, and take away your sin, and your aim to go about the Ordinance rightly in order to that end; if the strain and series of your way in these hath been honest and sincere, ye have no reason to account yourselves (at least altogether) unworthy Communicants: Tho', when we have done all that we can do, 'tis God himself who must enable us rightly to discern the Lord's Body, and who must graciously pass by many things that will be found amiss in us; according to good king Hezekiah his prayer, 2 Chron. xxx. 18, 19 "The good Lord pardon every one that prepareth his heart to seek God, tho' he be not cleansed according to the purification of the sanctuary:" So must we say, The good Lord pardon us, tho' we discern and take not up Christ's Body with that faith and love, with that distinctness and clearness, with that delight, cheerfulness and joy that become, and are requisite for such a solemn action.



S E R M O N III.

Preached immediately before the COMMUNION,

ON MATTH. xxii. 4.

— *All things are ready: come to the marriage.*

THERE are many great and glorious things spoken of the gospel; and our blessed Lord Jesus hath made use of many good similitudes, wonderfully apposite, to set it out: Sometimes 'tis called "the Kingdom of Heaven," for reasons that we will not now insist upon; sometimes 'tis called a Marriage, as here and elsewhere. Some of those similitudes shew what great and singular satisfaction is to be had in it; therefore it is compared to a Feast, Supper, and Dinner. Some of them shew the way how we are made partakers of it; so Opening and Receiving holds forth

believing: And some of those similitudes hold forth both, as this of a Marriage, which points at the strait union betwixt Christ and believers, and at the manner or way of our entering into this blessed union, on which follows communion.

We need not insist in opening the words, which are plain; we shall only say these two words, to make way for Observations: The first whereof shall be, to shew that the scope of the parable is not to hold forth peoples coming to the Ordinances or the Sacraments only or mainly; but their coming to Christ Jesus himself, and to the fat things in the Ordinances. Many come to the Ordinances, who come not to Christ and to the Feast; that which is called for here, is a real closing with Christ, and an accepting of him for our Husband, on his own terms. The Second Word is, to shew, that tho' the Ordinances be neither the Marriage nor the Feast, yet it is by the Ordinances that the Marriage is furthered, and the feast prepared and made ready; for faith takes Christ in the Word, and strikes hands with him in the Sacrament: When he saith in the Word, "Be thou for me, and I will be for thee:" Faith saith, Content Lord: And when he saith in the Sacrament, Take, Faith saith, Welcome with all my heart; he being there, as well as he is in the word.

These Two things being premised, we shall, 1. At once and together propose some observations from the words. 2. We shall clear and confirm them. And then, 3. We shall insist in the application of all jointly. The Observations are these, First, That in the Gospel there is a clear and manifest making-up of a Marriage betwixt Christ and souls. The preaching of the Gospel is like a man's making of a marriage for his son. The Second is, That this Marriage is the most excellent Marriage that ever was: Therefore it is called, "The Marriage of the King's Son." The Third is, That, before this Marriage can be brought about and accomplished, there are many things to be made ready. The Fourth is, That, where the Gospel comes, all things are made ready for souls closing with Christ in this Marriage. The Fifth is, That the Master of the Feast, the KING, God the Father, and the KING's Son, the Bridegroom, are not only content and willing, but very desirous to have sinners coming to the Marriage: They would fain (to speak so with reverence) have poor souls espoused to Christ. The Sixth is, That, when the Master sends out his servants in

his name, their great work is to invite to the wedding, and to close the marriage. The Seventh is, That, when people are invited to this Marriage, it is their duty, and greatly of their concern, to come. The Eighth is, That all they that come may expect a very hearty welcome: Therefore they are invited once and again. And if we compare this text with Luke xiv. we will find there, that the Master orders his servants to compel them that are invited to come in.

All these Observations are very obvious in the words; and if the Lord would graciously please to help us to speak, and you to hear, as they are not impertinent to our present purpose, so they might be made very edifying, strengthening, refreshing and comfortable to us.

We shall, in the Second place, a little more particularly clear and confirm every one of them. The First was, That there is a Marriage betwixt Christ and souls, held forth and made offer of in this Gospel. We take this for granted: For here is the King's Son, and some bidden to his Marriage, and those that are bidden are not worthy: They are all professors and members of the visible Church; the scope of the parable being to shew, that the offer of this Marriage was first made to the Jews, and again renewed to them, and then from them it came to the Gentiles. I shall in passing give you a little hint of the nature of this Marriage, in these Four: 1. There is by this Gospel a real union made up betwixt Christ and the souls of believers: Which union is not with the Ordinances, nor with sense, nor with the benefits which flow from Christ; but with Christ himself primarily and principally: And it is so near a tie, and very close, that it is preferred unto, and goeth beyond, the union that is betwixt the husband and wife, Eph. v. 30. "We are (says the apostle) members of his Body, of his flesh, and of his bones:" Where, alluding to that union betwixt husband and wife, he not only makes the union real, but makes the one much straiter than the other. 2. The nature of this union is such, that it is mutual; the Bridegroom hath in a manner (to speak so, with reverence of his Majesty,) no power over himself, when he is married unto the Bride; and the Bride hath no power over herself, but the Bridegroom: So that here there is a sort of mutual up-giving of the Bridegroom to the Bride, and of the Bride to the Bridegroom: according to those wonderfully condescending words, Hosea iii. 3. "Thou

shalt not be for another man, so will I also be for thee." The Lord hath believers under a peculiar tie to him, and he hath tied himself peculiarly to them, so that (if we may speak thus) neither of them is master of themselves: The Lord Jesus doth some way account himself not to be master of himself, he is so engaged to them to be theirs and for them, and cannot but be answerable to his engagement; and they are obliged to be no more masters of themselves, but to be absolutely and altogether at his disposing. 3. This union is made up by mutual consent of parties, and the consent must be willing. His consent comes in his word; he says from thence, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if any man will hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me." I come (as if he had said) in my gospel to woo; and, if any will consent to take me on the terms on which I offer myself, I will be theirs. The soul's consent is given by faith in his word, which is called, John i. 12. "Receiving of Him," and is relative to the offer: The offer is indeed backed and quickned by the Spirit, without which it would never be received; yet notwithstanding, that which our faith lays hold on, is not the Spirit, but the word quickned by the Spirit. 4. Consider here the effects that follow immediately and instantly on this marriage-union: Christ with all that is his becomes ours, and we with all that is ours become his: Our debt is imputed to him, he is liable to it, and must pay it, and provide for us, and be our Head and Husband; and his righteousness, the purchase of his death and sufferings, viz. justification, sanctification, his Spirit, grace and glory, and every good thing that he hath, become ours; and at length the Bride is taken into the King's ivory palaces.

The Second Observation was, "That this is a most honourable, noble and excellent marriage:" the like whereof never was, nor never shall be, from Adam to the end of the world: 'Tis with "the King's Son, with the Prince of the kings of the earth, the Heir of all things, the brightness of the Father's glory, the express image of his person, who was before all things, and by whom all things consist." O! is there any match like this? Is there any so great and so noble as He? Is there any in this world whom ye can marry, that is so rich as He?

They that marry Him, shall "inherit all things," Rev. xxi. 7. We may clear it a little further from Five or Six particulars in the text. 1. 'Tis an excellent, and honourable marriage, in respect of the Bridegroom, who is (as hath been hinted) the King's Son; who hath not another natural son. He is the "only begotten of the Father." There is not another Mediator: He is the Father's Equal and Fellow: So that, if (if we may put an IF to it,) the Father be great and glorious, so is he; for he is GOD, the same GOD equal with the FATHER in power and glory; "the wonderful Counsellor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of peace." This marriage is excellent and honourable, in respect of the Bride's Father-in-law, (so to speak,) He is the King: God the Father, Son and Holy Ghost have all a hand in it; and the believer, married to Christ, is daughter-in-law to the great God, ingrafted some way into the same stock, allayed with the same family, 2 Cor. vi. 18. "I will be a Father to you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty." 3. It is excellent and honourable, in respect of the preparation made for it. There was never such a wedding-feast: the dinner is prepared, the oxen and fatlings killed: But you will say, What is all that? Even Jesus Christ himself, He is that "Bread indeed, that Drink indeed, the Feast of fat things, and of wines on the lees well refined:" The Bridegroom is (to say so,) the chief Dish that the believer feeds and lives upon for ever; and the spiritual blessings and benefits, that are gotten in him, and from him, are as so many dishes of this feast, such as righteousness, pardon of sin, peace and friendship with God, the Spirit, adoption, sanctification, joy in the Holy Ghost, grace and glory, the hope of a room in those mansions that are in his Father's house, of a seat with him at his table and on his throne; even a share in his whole purchase: And is not that a feast? 4. 'Tis honourable and excellent, in respect of its most noble rise, viz. from all eternity, in the bosom of the Father: It bred (to say so) in the King's breast before the foundation of the world was laid: the covenant of redemption was then concluded, and the contract of marriage there drawn, and the blessed project of it then laid down: "Sacrifices and offerings thou didst not desire: (saith the Mediator, Psal. xl.)

" Mine ears hast thou opened: burnt-offerings nor sin-
 " offerings thou hast not required: Then said I, Lo, I
 " come, in the volume of thy book it is written of me,
 " I delight to do thy will, O my God." The Father
 gives so many to the Son to be redeemed, of whom he
 willingly, readily and cheerfully accepts, and offers to
 satisfy for them, which in due time he doth. 5. It is
 excellent and honourable in this respect, that there was
 never such a concurrence of so many and so great things
 to commend and further a marriage as there is in this:
 Such as the making of the world, men and angels: the
 incarnation of Christ, or his coming into the world: his
 preaching, and working of miracles for confirmation of
 his doctrine: his suffering and dying, rising and ascend-
 ing: his giving ministers and their gifts: and, to make
 up the marriage-union, the Spirit from heaven coming
 along with the Word, and working faith in the soul;
 by which bonds, Christ and the believer are joined to-
 gether: Christ by his Spirit apprehending the believer,
 and the believer apprehending Christ by faith. Was there
 ever a marriage-contract or union bound up betwixt two
 such vastly and infinitely distant parties? was there ever
 such honour and riches attending and following a match:
 such righteousness, remission of sin, adoption, peace with
 God, joy of the Holy Ghost, the Spirit, holiness in the
 beginning, and gradual advances of it: fellowship, and
 walking with God, the white Stone, the new Name,
 the Throne, the Crown, Grace, and Glory, every thing
 that is good for the Bride here, and glory in heaven:
 in a word, Jesus Christ, and all the Benefits of his pur-
 chase? Were there ever such easy terms and conditions?
 It is only, " Come to the wedding;" when the King
 comes a-wooing, let him be welcomed with your heart's
 consent: when he says, " I am content to marry you,"
 let your hearts say, " Amen, Lord Jesus, I am content
 " to marry thee, and to be for thee, and for none other."
 And, may not I add, Was there ever such security and
 confirmation given of any marriage? 'Tis confirmed by
 the death of the Bridegroom, he hath sealed his testa-
 ment with his blood, and there is no annulling nor al-
 tering of a man's testament when he is dead: And our
 Lord Jesus, who was once dead, is now alive, and lives
 for evermore: he will never die again, nor make another

testament. O beloved hearers, all this is to let you see that our Lord is in earnest and very willing to espouse you; and indeed it shall not be his fault if it be not a bargain: And, if it be indeed a bargain betwixt your souls and him, 'tis a very rare and rich one! O the many rare, excellent, noble, notable and non-such privileges and advantages that attend this marriage, and are to be enjoyed by the soul espoused to Christ! even God and Christ, grace and glory, and all that is comprehended under these, belongs to that soul. We must here be silent, lest in speaking of them we darken them by our words; here is an abyss and bottomless depth, ready, as it were, to swallow up words: We confess, we can tell but very little what they are; nay, if all the ablest and holiest ministers on earth, and all the angels in heaven were joined together, they could not to the full, by very far, tell what an excellent match and marriage this is, even to be matched with the Son of God; and yet this privilege and honour gave all the saints, all believers, to whom he is Wonderful and Precious, tho' alas! not as he ought to be: There is a day coming, when we shall know to satisfaction, "that the Father is in the Son, and the Son in the Father; and that believers are in Christ, and he in them:" We shall then know the now inexpressible and inconceivable advantages of this marriage, "when he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and wondred at in all them that believe:" And till that day the one half will never be told us.

The Third Observation was, "That there are many things to be removed out of the way, and to be done:" Many things to be made ready before this marriage can be made up. 1. There's natural distance between the parties, that must be removed; God cannot be one flesh with us: And betwixt parties to be married, there must be some suitableness of nature; therefore, to remove this distance, and to bring about the marriage, the Son of God becomes Man, that he may be IMMANUEL, God with us, God in our nature, and so in capacity to be closed with. 2. There is a sinful distance, which also must be removed before this marriage can be made up: For God is a consuming fire to sinners; he and they neither will nor can unite in that posture: Therefore, before an offer of marriage

can be made to any purpose, "He must give himself for his Church, that he may sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word;" and then it follows, "That He presents her to himself a glorious Church, without spot and wrinkle, or any such thing." He could not have access to marry his Bride, she was so uncomely, filthy and loathsom, lying in a most pitiful condition, in her blood, as Ezekiel sets it forth to the life, and at great length, Chap. xvi. Therefore, to cleanse her, he gave himself for her. 3. Ere all this could be done, there behoved a ground to be laid for peace with God the offended Party, who was to be Father-in-law: And here comes in the covenant of redemption, Psal. xl. 6. 7. "Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire; then said I, Lo, I come," &c. For taking away the curse, and reconciling the elect to God, the Father says, (as it were) I must needs be once in friendship with them, ere I can admit them to my house; and, Son, if thou wilt satisfy my justice, and pay their debt, I shall give them to thee for a feed, and to be thy Bride and Wife: Well, says Christ the Mediator, Father, I accept of the bargain: "Lo, I come to do thy will, O my God:" Whereupon it comes to pass, (as the apostle hath it, 2 Cor. v. last,) "That he is made sin for us, who knew no sin, and we are made the righteousness of God in him:" For it was as really agreed in the covenant of redemption that he should be made sin for us, as it came to pass in the actual execution of it: And thus way is made for the marriage. 4. When this is done, the marriage must be proclaimed through the world by the preached gospel, the contract must be opened up and read, and sinners consent called for. We are told therein, that "The WORD is made flesh, and dwelt among us:" And because "no man hath seen God at any time, the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he declares him," as it is John i. 14. 15. He comes and reveals more clearly the contract, first in his own Person, and by his own ministry; and then by sending his servants, and telling that all things are ready. 5. The last thing to be removed, is the uncircumcision and stupidity of our hearts. Naturally we are given to slight him in his offers, to refuse to open to him, and to let him in when he knocks, to make excuse, to delay, shift and put him off; nay, to refuse to entertain his proposal of marriage, and to give

him a repulse: Therefore he comes by his Spirit, and 'puts in his finger by the hole of the door,' and lets some 'myrrho drop on the handles of the lock,' and powerfully, but sweetly, inclines the heart to cast itself open to him; and then he performs the promises of sanctification, 'circumcising the heart to love him with all the heart, and with all the soul;' as it is, Deut. xxx. 6. And all these promises are contrived, framed and provided to meet with difficulties in us. We are told, John vi. 44. that 'no man can come to Christ, except the Father that sent him draw him;' and, Psal. cx. 3. it is promised, that 'in the day of his power his people shall be willing; and whoever (being made willing) cometh, shall in nowise be cast out,' John vi. 37.

The Fourth Observation is, "That by the preaching of the gospel, whithersoever it cometh, and by the great things made offer of therein, all things are made ready:" Obstructions and whatever might hinder the closing of the marriage, are removed. The Father is ready, having declared his willingness to give his consent, 'This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased, hear ye him,' Matth. iii. I am well satisfied with him, take him to you for your Head and Husband: The Son is ready to take all by the hand that will embrace him; pardon of sin, peace with God, sanctification, the mansion, &c. are ready to be bestowed: the feast is ready, the fatlings are prepared; the promises are filled with every necessary good thing, 'There is bread enough in the prodigal's Father's house, and to spare.' The contract is ready, and an offer of it made on the Bridegroom's side; the terms are drawn up and put in form, and all things agreed upon and ready, even to the subscription: And there is no more required, but that the hearers of this gospel heartily consent to take him, and submit to his righteousness and dominion; which if they do, all things shall be theirs, even life eternal, and all things that may fit them for it, promises for this life, and that which is to come, and Christ engaged to keep the bargain: And this is it that is preached every day to you, tho', alas! unsuitably; so that 'tis not now, 'Who shall go up to heaven, and bring down Christ from above? or, who shall descend unto the deep, and bring him up from the dead?' that we may get him to marry; 'but the

righteousness of faith saith, The word is near thee, even in thy mouth,' &c. Christ's consent is not to be asked or brought from afar, for he hath declared it in his word; and the terms of the contract are, 'If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe with thy heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved,' Rom. x. 8, 9. Engage therefore honestly with Christ, and keep to him; deny yourselves, and close with him; give up yourselves to him, and ye shall be saved: And that is all one with this, to be married to him. Yea, the day of the marriage is set, and that is the day of the gospel; the Bridegroom is come to the Church, the table is covered, and the ministers, the Bridegroom's friends, are waiting on to espouse you to him, and to make up the marriage: so that all things meet and requisite for making peace betwixt God and sinners are ready.

The Fifth Observation was, "That Christ the Bridegroom and his Father are very willing to have the match made up, and the marriage compleated." Therefore doth he send forth his servants with a strict commission, not only to tell sinners that all things are ready, but to bid them come to the marriage: Yea, he not only wills them to tell that all things are ready and to invite, but to 'compel them (as Luke hath it, chap. xiv. 23.) to come in; to stir them up, and press them to it; to threaten them if they come not; and to accept of no refusal or nay-say. The evidences of his willingness are many, which I will not now insist upon; as, that he hath made the feast, and such a feast, and prepared so for it, and given himself to bring it about, and keeps up the offer and proclamation of the marriage, even after it is slighted: All these, and many more, tell plainly that the Father and the Son are most heartily willing: therefore they expostulate when this marriage is refused, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often would I have gathered you, but you would not!" Matth. xxiii. "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, if thou, even thou, hadst known in this thy day the things that belong to thy peace!" Luke xix. All these sad complaints, that 'Israel would not hearken to his voice, and his people would have none of him,' Psal. lxxxvi. 7. that 'he came to his own, and his own received him not,' John i. 11. and 'that they will not come to him that they might have life,' John v. 40. make out his willingness abundantly and undeniably.

The Sixth Observation was, "That the great work of the ministers of the gospel is, to invite unto, and to endeavour to bring this marriage betwixt Christ and souls to a close." The servants are sent out for this very end, to conclude the bargain: Tho' he be Lord of all, yet he would not employ in this work, angels; neither would he speak immediately by his own voice from heaven, for by reason of his greatness we could not have endured that way of wooing; but saith on the matter to men, subject to the like passions and infirmities, Go tell that the King hath such a Son, and that ye are sent out to woo in his name; and make not only offer of marriage, but request, intreat, perswade, pray and obtest, yea command and compel them to come to the marriage, by holding forth the curse which comes on them that will not come: And hence are those denounced woes, and shaking of the dust off their feet, for a testimony against them that will not come.

The Seventh Observation was, "That it is the duty of all to whom the good news of this marriage come, to come to it; and, when they are invited to it, presently without all delay to yield." Needs there any proof of this? does not the Master's sending, and the servants coming, call for it? do not his preparing of all things, his inviting to the marriage, and his expostulating with them that come not, and our own great necessity, urgently require it?

The Eighth and last Observation was, "That all they that come may expect a very good and heartsome welcome." None need to fear that they shall not be made welcome; seeing they are come not uncalled, they shall not sit un-
served: The Lord will not look down on such as come; nay, he is waiting on to welcome them, and to meet them as it were mid-way; as we see in the parable of the prodigal, Luke xv. his father stays not till his son come to him, but seeing him afar off coming, he runs with speed to meet him, and then most affectionately embraces him, and falls on his neck and kisses him: And if the poor child should say, 'I am not worthy to be called a son;' he answers that, not suffering him to speak out all that he had resolved to say: Even when the debauched runagate had spent all by riotous living, and would fain have told out the sad and shameful story of his gross miscarriages and great unworthiness, he interrupts him, and says in a manner,

Son, hold thy peace as to that; I know well it is grievous to thee; go quickly, and put on the robe, the ring and the shoes that are provided for thee.

I come now, in the Third place, to make application of all: And, is it possible to speak or hear of this subject as becomes? who is sufficient for these things, to speak suitably in the name of the Lord, and to lay before you this contract of marriage with such a Bridegroom? Beloved hearers, are ye in a suitable posture to trust with him? do ye think that ye are for this marriage? is it your serious purpose to close the bargain with him? If so, pray the Lord to give us to speak, and you to hear the word in such manner as it may be a marriage-day indeed. There are very good news here, and blessed eternally be God, that ever we heard them, or had them to speak of, and that ye have them yet to hear; they should make your very souls, in a manner, fighter within you, and make you to rouse up yourselves to welcome them with gladness of heart.

And therefore, 1. We would exhort you all to believe this report. There are, alas! but few who do indeed believe, that the eternal God hath this design of marriage betwixt him and sinners: Therefore, let not your hearts be straitned, only believe that this is the good word of God; that these are the faithful and true sayings of him that cannot lie, and that he is waiting on to ratify them to all who give them credit. 'Tis somewhat hard to deliver or receive a word of threatening in faith, but, in some respect, more hard to believe a word of promise and of consolation; it is proportionably hard to look upon this as God's own offering of a marriage with his Son, as if he himself were by Viva Voce speaking it out of heaven, and to believe that this offer is really his: And therefore, as I desire (as his servant) to speak to you, so I would, again and again, obtest you to be roused up, and to rouse up yourselves to believe it. 2. Rouse, stretch and enlarge your understandings, and your hearts and affections for beholding, conceiving and embracing this rich bargain of grace: O consider seriously, from whom it is, for what end it is, how it is brought about, and doth come to you; the height and depth, the length and breadth whereof is inconceivable: Be holily amazed and wonder, that the offer of this marriage comes to you, and that he is content to marry you. 3. In a word, would you know what w

have to do with you, or what is our commission to you this day? This is even it, to tell you that the King hath made a marriage for his Son, and hath prepared and made all things ready for reuniting you to himself; yea, this same King that hath made this wedding ready, and hath carved out this way of throughing his design, by speaking to you in his word by his servants, speaks to you by us, and we speak to you in his name, and tell you, that our blessed Lord Jesus is wooing you; we declare, publish and proclaim it: O take notice of it. Our Lord Jesus is not far to seek, he is here waiting on to close the bargain with you: This is our errand, to proclaim these glad tidings to you; and what gladder tidings could you wish, than to have it told you, that ye may be happy and easily happy; and that, if ye be content to be so, there is nothing that might mar this happiness, but it is removed and taken out of the way? Is not the Father ready? He hath given his consent: Is not the Bridegroom ready, when he hath done so much, and is waiting on your consent? The feast is ready, and the garments are ready, and there is no more to do, but to take and put them on; and faith exercised on him will do both. The contract is ready, and there is nothing to be changed or altered in it; and he is ready to accept of you, if ye will accept of him: Our blessed Lord Jesus says, he is content to marry you; and there is no more to do, but to subscribe your name to the contract. If you want clothes, he will give them to you; if ye want a house, if ye want meat or drink, he will provide for you; whatever it be that you really stand in need of, for soul or body, in time or eternity, ye shall have it from him: The promises are filled with all things that pertain to life and godliness, to this life and to that which is come; there is in effect nothing wanting but your consent, and let not that be wanting, I beseech you.

In prosecuting this purpose, I shall speak a little, 1. To those to whom the offer is made, or to those who are called. 2. To what they are called to. 3. To the terms on which they are called. 4. To the manner how ye should come. 5. To the peremptoriness of the call, and to the necessity of coming. And, 6. (if it be possible to win at it) A word to some motives, whereby ye may be pressed to come, and not to neglect the opportunity of such a precious season of grace.

For the FIRST: It is not one or two, or some few that are called, not the great only, nor the small only, not the holy only, nor the profane only, but ye are all bidden, the call comes to all and every one of you in particular, poor and rich, high and low, holy and profane: "Ho. (proclaimeth the Lord, as it were, with an OYES, Isa. lv. 1.) "every one that thirsts, come; and he that hath no money, let him come; whosoever will, let him come and take of the water of life freely," Rev. xxii. 17. Our blessed Lord Jesus is not straitned in his call; and we may humbly say in some measure, that we are not straitned in our bowels; in his name we invite all of you, and make offer of Jesus Christ to be your Husband, that ye may have 'a room among them that stand by, and be with him for ever.' I say: We make this offer to all of you: To you that are Atheists, to you that are Graceless, to you that are Ignorant, to you that are Hypocrites, to you that are Lazy and Lukewarm, to the civil and to the profane; we pray, we beseech, we obtest you all to come to the wedding: 'Call (saith the Lord) the blind, the maimed, the halt, &c. bid them all come, yea. 'Compel them to come in:' Grace can do more and greater wonders than to call such; it can not only make the offer of the marriage to them, but it can make up the match effectually betwixt Christ and them: We will not, we dare not say, that all of you will get Christ for a Husband; but we do most really offer him to you all, and it shall be your own fault, if ye want him and go without him. And therefore, before we proceed any further, we do solemnly protest, and before God and his Son Jesus Christ, take instruments this day, that this offer is made to you; and that it is told to you in his name, that the Lord Jesus is willing to match with you, even the profanest and most graceless of you, if ye be willing to match with him; and he earnestly invites you to come to the wedding: If you can touch at any thing on his side, that is not ready, or at any thing on your side, but it may thro' grace be made ready if ye will come, you may; but 'tis impossible, for 'the Covenant is well-ordered and sure,' and that 'in all things;' and these words are not the words of men, but the words of 'the true and faithful Witness,' which ye must count and reckon for, when we are dead and gone: 'He hath killed his oxen and fatlings, and prepared his dinner, and bid his guests; all things are ready,' in the

due order and manner, whether on your side or on his, if ye be willing to step to and make the bargain: He hath drawn up the contract, and sent us out with it to you, to crave your subscription; and, if ye be ready for that, he craves no more of you. Now, I put you all to it, whether will ye subscribe it or not? And I would not put one of you without the reach of this invitation. However we be, alas! how carnal in speaking his mind, yet we desire not to obscure nor limit our Lord's grace; he calls all of you to the wedding, he hath sent us out as his servants (tho' of all the most unworthy) to close and conclude the contract of marriage with you this day, if you be willing. Come then, O come and subscribe, and it shall be in very deed a bargain. If ye can thro' grace say from your hearts, 'We will take him;' then I say to you, 'Take him, and have him with the Father's blessing.' Our commission is not only to offer him, and to invite you, to take him, but to close a bargain betwixt him and you who are content to take him: we would (as the apostle speaks 2 Cor. xi. 2.), 'espouse you to one Husband, that we might present you a chaste virgin to Christ,' and have you hand-fasted to him, as the word is: And this is very well becoming one of the days of the Son of Man, and one of such seasons of his grace, to make this offer to great and small, rich and poor; learned and unlearned, gracious and graceless, hypocrites and profane: there is here no exception of persons with him: the blessed God is content to match with the most graceless and godless of you, as well as with those who are gracious and godly: 'There is joy in heaven at the conversion of a sinner,' and the price was paid for the elect that are yet graceless, as well as for these of them who are now gracious; for all were once in the same condition: Therefore look not with narrow and straitned hearts on the rich and liberal allowance of our blessed Lord Jesus.

But, **SECONDLY**, What is it that we call you to, when we bid you come to the marriage? 'Tis not to the communion only, 'tis not to any of Christ's benefits only, 'tis not to say at first-hand confidently that all is yours, or to have a sure knowledge (as ye call it) and persuasion at the very first that it is so; tho' I heartily wish that ye may find this persuasion on solid and good grounds; but it is first and mainly to marry the Bridegroom, and then to come

to the feast: We call you to believe, and we declare in his name, that, if ye will betake yourselves to him in good earnest, ye shall be saved; if ye will, as it were, put your hand to the pen, and subscribe yourselves heartily content to take him, ye shall most certainly have him and all his benefits. Ye that are profane, take him, but not to live still in your profanity, but to study holiness in all manner of conversation, in his strength; ye that are self-righteous, take him, but not to live still in the good conceit of your self-righteousness, but to renounce it, and to take him for your righteousness. Ye that are blind, take him, but not to live still in your blindness, but to grow in grace and in the knowledge of him: Whatever ye be, and whatever ill aileth you, take him, but not to continue in the ill, but to get it amended. This, sure, is no less than to call you to the communion, yea it is more; whether therefore ye come to the communion or not, we call and invite you all to come to Christ, and to marry him; which if ye do, we dare promise you, in his name, begun communion with him here, and full communion with him in heaven hereafter.

THIRDLY, What are the terms on which ye are called and may warrantably come to this marriage? I need not stand on the terms on his side, nor to tell you what he promiseth; 'tis this in a word, 'I will be for thee;' He is content to make over all that is his to you; 'pardon of sin, justification, sanctification, his Spirit to quicken you, even his whole purchase to enrich you: In sum, (as it is, 1 Cor. i. 31.) 'He is made of God unto you wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption: he hath made 'all things yours, (as it is, 1 Cor. iii. 21.) and in him ye are compleat,' (as the apostle hath it, Col. ii. 10.) Ye need never go out of him, to seek for any thing truly good that ye stand in need of. And on the other hand, What seeks he of you, but 'to be for him, and not for another?' as it is, Hos. iii. He seeks no hard condition: In sum, it may be comprehended in that word, 1 Cor. i. 31. 'That he that glorieth may glory in the Lord: not to glory or boast in any thing, or in ourselves, but of him, and in him. But, for clearness cause, I shall draw the terms on your side to these three, 1. You must deny yourself, your lusts, and idols, and your own righteousness: 'Where is boasting then? (saith the apostle, Rom. iii. 27.) It is excluded: by what law? of works? nay, but the law of faith.' Ye then that would

marry Christ, and share indeed in the feast, ye must have a sight of that which ye want, and of your own inability to make it up, and that ye are undone in yourselves without him: 'To him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness,' that is, To him that expects nothing by his works, but betakes himself to Christ and his righteousness for his justification before God: And that is no unreasonable condition.

2. As ye would not glory in yourselves, so ye would glory in him. Whatever ye deny in yourselves, ye would put him in the room of it; if ye dare not lippen or trust your souls to your own righteousness, lippen or trust them to his: He says, I am content to pay your debt; and since ye cannot pay your own debt yourselves, say humbly to him, Blessed Lord Jesus, pay our debt for us: 'He is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth,' Rom. x. 3. When he offers himself, take him thus, and let faith say, So be it, Lord; I accept of the bargain. O! hold to it, and quit it not. 3. It is required that ye shall be his, and have no power over yourselves; and this takes in sanctification, dying to sin and living to righteousness, adorning the gospel, living answerably to the several relations ye stand in: For tho' mortification and holiness be not the cause for which he marries, yet it is a condition of the contract; and it well becomes his Bride to be dutiful: 'Thou shalt be for me, and I will be for thee:' If he will graciously please to be for us, 'tis all the reason in the world that we should be for him. Now we know somewhat of the terms, which may all come in under these Three; there are many conditions on his side, and but few on ours.

FOURTHLY, Ye would consider the peremptoriness of this call, to accept of and to marry our Lord Jesus Christ on these terms. 'Tis not an ordinary compliment, but proposed by the King the Father, and by the King's Son the Bridegroom; he sends out his servants who are come to call you peremptorily: And there are Three Peremptories, that this offer and call hath with it; all which three we carry in our commission, and crave of you to subscribe to them. The First whereof is, That ye take no other husband but this Bridegroom: There is no latitude left to you in this; ye must by no means engage with any other: 'Tis only for Jesus Christ that we woo, and we seek of you that ye would give him your souls, your hearts and affec-

tions that ye may be devoted to him and to no other; and therefore we intimate to you that are married and joined to idols, that ye must be divorced from those, and betake you to him alone. The Second is, the peremptoriness of the terms we speak of; we cannot, and ye must not alter one jot or tittle. Ye must deny yourselves, ye must be content to be divorced from your lusts and idols, ye must renounce your own righteousness, and give up with the law your first husband, considered as a covenant of works, and run out from the curses thereof to him, which ye will never do, till ye see your own righteousness to be as filthy rags, and reject it, as part of your indictment, that ever ye trusted to it. Ye must 'forget your father's house.' 2. As you must deny yourselves, so you must close with Christ, and embrace him for your Husband and Lord: Do not think that ye will or can dwell beside him, that ye can sit and hear him, if ye marry him not. 3. Ye must be devoted to him in your conversation, he must needs be your King as well as your Priest: Ye must forsake father and mother, and all your kindred, and betake you to him; and ye must take up and keep house with him; you must dwell with him, and study to be answerable to the marriage-tye and obligation put upon you. We dare dispense with none of the Three. The Third Peremptory is this, As ye must engage with no other, and as ye must not alter the terms, so ye must not delay to come and close the bargain, ye must not put off till to-morrow, nay not an hour: 'All things are ready.' Just now, 'Now is the accepted time:' Here stands the blessed Bridegroom, here are the conditions and terms on which he will marry you; and we, as the Bridegroom's friends, stand ready to espouse you to him. We dare not be answerable to our Master, nor can we be answerable to our trust and commission, if we shuffle by or thrust out any of you, if ye do not thrust out yourselves: nor may we admit of an excuse from any of you: And therefore let me again say to you, that here is not only a marriage, and of all marriages the most excellent: but let me beseech and obtest you to come to the wedding: either come, or give a reason why ye will not, or cannot: As you can assign no relevant reason for your not coming, we dare not accept of any irrelevant reason, nor admit of any answer but this, that ye will take him: we dare admit of no excuse: ye must not shift nor delay. Ye would think

that those who were bidden, Luke xiv. might have come, when they had seen their farm, and proved their oxen: but that would not be with them: So I say, it will not be with you, to shift this offer. He is here waiting on, to see who will consent and say, 'Even so I take him:' say it, O say it seriously, and abide by it.

O! are there any here now looking up to him? are there any here that would fain have it a closed bargain? are there any here that believe these things as the truths of God? Then we pray you let them sink down into your hearts, and come. And, to press this a little further, let me ask, What can hinder the making of this bargain? Is it the want of notice or timeous intimation of it? That cannot be, ye are clearly convinced of the contrary: Is it because ye will or can be happy without him? Wo to that happiness: Is it any difficulty standing in the way? That shall be removed: yea, as to him it is removed already, and shall be as to you on your closing with him. Pose and put your own hearts to it then: Is there any of you that dare or can find in your hearts to refuse? The Lord is waiting on, his faithfulness is engaged to make out what he offereth: He stretcheth out his hand, and saith, 'Even so I take you' if ye will take me: Are ye content to stretch forth your hand, and to say, 'Even so I take thee, blessed Lord Jesus?' Or, if this be not win at to satisfaction, are there any rousing and stretching themselves to essay how it will go with them? what are ye doing? is it a bargain or not? Ye must say, Yea, or Nay, and that even now. We suppose ye will not say downright Nay: tho' more than probably many will delay: But this must not be: the table may be drawn, other guests may be called in, and ye removed. We cannot allow you an hour's time to advise, especially from indifferency: yea, if ye begin to take advisement for shifting a present closure, Christ's call and invitation, and your consenting will readily cool upon your hand. Paul says, that 'he consulted not with flesh and blood:' So must not ye consult with flesh and blood in this matter, ye must cast away the beggar's cloak, be content to deny yourself, quit your lusts, and close with him presently, or ye may never have the like opportunity. There is a necessity imposed on you from the command to

come, from the curse and prejudice that abides you, and will certainly overtake you if you come not: ye will be eternally miserable without him, there is no happiness but in him. The King is on his throne, the table is set and covered, the day is fixed, his servants invite in his name: come therefore, come without further lingering, dallying, shifting or delay: Alas! there are too many days put by already, ye must put by no more.

Now, let me speak a word further to this purpose: What can marr the matter? what can obstruct its being a bargain: Certainly it must be one of Three: Either,
 1. Because ye are not content with the Bridegroom: Or,
 2. Because ye are not content with the terms: Or,
 3. Because ye are not content with yourselves, or with something in yourselves.

As for the First, I suppose ye can say nothing against the Bridegroom: Is there any other like to him, or that can compare with him? I appeal even to you atheists, and profane wretches, that live and ly in your lusts, is there a beloved like this Beloved? hath he a match in heaven or earth? is he not the King's Son? And if ye ask who that is, ye may hear and know from Psal. xxiv. 'The King of Glory, the Lord of Hosts, strong and mighty in battle:' and from Heb. i. 3. 'The Brightness of the Father's Glory, the express Image of his Person, upholding all things by the word of his power:' There is none like him, but the Father, and the holy Spirit; and, as God, he is One with them. Ye have both the question and answer, Cant. v. 9. 'What is thy Beloved more than another beloved?' What is yonder Christ, of whom we hear so much? The answer is given, (which we cannot stay now to paraphrase upon), 'He is white and ruddy, the Chiefest or Standard-bearer among ten thousands, fairer than the sons of men.' And if ye would know him more particularly, 'His head is as the most fine gold:' he is God: 'His locks (or his hair) are bushy and black as a raven:' there is not the least unseemliness, even in those things that would, to our thinking, seem less necessary, as his hair: Yea, 'His very garments smell of myrrhe, aloes, and cassia,' (as it is, Psal. xlv.) 'His eyes are as the eyes of doves by the rivers of waters, washed with milk, and fitly set:' O so lovely as his properties are! 'His cheeks as beds of spices, as sweet flowers;

his lips like lilies dropping sweet-smelling myrrhe; his hands as gold-rings set with beryl; his belly (or bowels of love and affection) like the bright ivory overlaid with sapphires; his legs like pillars of marble set upon sockets of fine gold: his countenance like Lebanon, excellent as the cedars.' O so excellent and stately! 'His mouth is most sweet,' or (as the word is) Sweetness, in the abstract; never soul kissed his mouth, but there was a bond thereby laid on it, that it could never again part with him: In a word, 'He is altogether lovely,' or (as the word is) 'all desires:' there is nothing that souls can desire, but it is in him; and there is nothing in him, but what has desirableness in it: 'This is my Beloved, and this is my Friend, (says the Bride) O ye daughters of Jerusalem:' This is he, he is sure no common or ordinary beloved; see if among all the beloveds in heaven or earth there be any like him: O ye despisers and slightsers of the Son of God, put yourselves to it, is there any like him to be found? has he not the preference of and the preheminance above all beloveds? 'He is the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth; he is the mighty God, the wonderful Counsellor, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace.' It would well become us all to be wondring at him, and to be drawing near to him, to behold him in his beauty, to 'go forth and behold King Solomon with the crown wherewith his mother crowned him in the day of his espousals. O take a stayed view of him in his personal excellencies, and in the excellent qualifications of his mediatory office, and it cannot be that on this ground ye will cast at the match: Will any of you dare to say it, or to abide by it, that ye will not marry Christ, because ye think nothing of him, or because he is not worthy to be thought of? We suppose, none will do so.

If it be the Second, viz. the Terms, that ye are not content with: Ye would have Christ, grace, and glory, and every good thing; but here it sticketh, you look at it as an hard matter to be denied to yourself, and to be wholly God's, to renounce your own righteousness, and your lusts, and your idols, to be absolutely devoted to him, and wholly dependent on him in your walk: As 'the evil and the foolish servant called him a hard master;' so do many think of him, tho' they will not down-right say so much in

express words. But I would ask you, Is there any unreasonable thing here? or, shall all those terms be sought after, in some respect, in the marriage of a poor creature like yourselves; and will ye deny them to Christ? 1. If you get his righteousness, should ye not deny your own? If ye come under the covenant of grace with him, is there any prejudice to lay by the covenant of works? If ye get him for your second Husband, and infinitely best, is it any prejudice to quit your first husband the Law? And, in that respect, is it reasonable to cast at the bargain, because it is free? 2. Is it not reasonable that ye should give him the room of all things? If he be able to fill the room of all, let him have his room, as being well worthy of it: It is your advantage to quit your lusts and sinful pleasures, your covetousness, pride, vanity, self-conceit, &c. to exchange all for him; and, if ye be not content of this condition, ye say he is not worth the having. 3. Is it not reasonable that ye should be devoted to him in your conversation? that ye should no longer play the harlot, but be as a chaste virgin to him? Is it any advantage to you to follow your idols, that will go betwixt you and happiness? If heaven be an advantage, it is your advantage to quit them and be for Christ: Or, is it any prejudice to be holy? or, will ye quit Christ, because ye must be holy? or, will ye refuse him, because he will not suffer you, to your ruin, to take your own will as formerly? Yea, it is not only reasonable, but very good and profitable; nay, there is a necessity you should be holy: And, may not love to him loose your heart from sin? There was another sort of consultation, and other bowels of love, at the first making of the bargain betwixt the Father and the Son; and it was calculated for more honourable designs, and levelled to more noble ends than any thing the devil, or the world, or the flesh can promise to you: And any of you that will stand and stick at the terms, that are so just, equitable, and every way reasonable and easy withal, we take your own consciences to be witnesses that they are so, and you dare not avouch the denial of their being so. If ye be content to take him, to be reconciled and made friends with God by his satisfaction, and to be made holy by his sanctifying Spirit, to be for him as he shall be for you; it is a bargain: And what, I pray, ails

you at such a bargain? If this be not made, ye shall never be able to make such another. What should ye do then, but come to the wedding? 'Tis not time to dispute or debate, but to close: Say, O say sincerely, as these do, Jer. iii. 22. 'Behold, we come unto thee, for thou art the Lord our God:' When he says, as he did to them, 'Return ye backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings;' turn it over to him, and say, 'Behold we come unto thee.'

THIRDLY, Are ye not content with yourselves, or with something in yourselves? Do ye indeed think and say, that it is a good bargain, and that the terms are very reasonable and easy, and we have nothing to say against them, but we have (alas!) much to say of and against ourselves; the bargain pleaieth us wondrous well, and so do the terms, but we are not at all pleased with ourselves? I answer, 1. May ye not then the better quit and deny yourselves, and take Christ in the room and place of self? 2. I answer, Christ makes no such objection; he bids the most prophane, the most ignorant and graceless wretch, the most hypocritical dissembler, that never knew what it was to be honest, come, and assures them that they shall be welcome, if they will come indeed.

OBJECT. But I can do nothing, I cannot keep a word that I say to Christ. I ANSWER, Engage and consent to close with Christ, on his own terms, and doing and keeping shall follow; to give thy consent, is that which thou art now called to, and he engages to help thee to perform.

OBJECT. But, shall I take on an engagement, presently to break it again? I ANSWER, If indeed thou consent, thou mayest fail and break, but the covenant will never be utterly broken nor dissolved; yea, thou shalt have Surety for thy keeping of it: 'Forasmuch as (saith the apostle, Heb. vii. 22.) Jesus was made Surety of a better Testament.'

If ye Object and say, That ye have much sin, that ye are lothsom and abominable; subscribe this contract and bargain, and ye have a free and full discharge of all your debt: 'I will (saith the Lord, Hosea ii. 19) betrothe thee unto me in loving kindness and mercies:' He will pardon your iniquities; there is no exact or severe seeking and searching out of the debt here, where 'tis ingenuously taken

with, but rather a covering of it: He 'will also cleanse you from all your filthiness, and from all your idols.'

But it may be thou wilt Object, and say, I will rather purpose than engage, because I fear I shall break it.

ANSWER, But, is it likely that thou wilt make good such a purpose, who darest not engage? Or, will purposes and resolutions do the business, without performing? Purposes of marriage make not the marriage; it is actual consent and engaging which doth that.

But thou wilt Object, and say, Alas! I am not in a right frame, I am very confused, all things are wrong with me. ANSWER, What is this thou sayest? Will your frame be amended without Christ? will those swarms of corruptions be beat out before thou take in 'the King of glory, who is strong and mighty in battle?'

But thou wilt Object, I am not clear as to my interest. ANSWER. Wilt thou not consent till thou be clear? that is as much as to say, thou art doubting, but that thou wilt not put it out of doubt: If thou be unclear as to thy subscription, rather subscribe and write thy name over again; if ye have not at all subscribed, take now the pen and do it; say, Lord Jesus, I come to thee, and will be thine.

OBJECT. Alas! fain would I come to the wedding, but I cannot come, it will not do with me; I would fain believe, but my faith is not prompt and ready. I ANSWER, Is not the covenant provided with an answer to that also? It calls for nothing but for your subscribing; and, if ye say ye cannot, look well that it be not a shift: It comes to this, Yea, or Nay; and if ye say, ye cannot say Yea in faith, which yet thou wouldst fain be at; is there not a promise of grace, that tho' your hand be as it were withered, if ye mint and essay, you shall be enabled to stretch it forth? Faith may come, in the very essaying to grip him; only essay it, and it shall go with you.

OBJECT. I have essayed it often, and it hath not gone with me. ANSW. Essay it again, and cast a new knot; if your evidence be not clear, subscribe over again.

OBJECT. But it goes not with me; when all is done, I cannot believe: I would subscribe, but I cannot write, (as it were), I cannot distinctly act faith. ANSW. What is that? Our Lord stands not on that; tho' you cannot write well, do as ye can: 'Tis strange to see, how some's

subscription is almost like a scratching with crow-toes, yet 'tis a valid subscription; some again will write down their mark in place of their name, and that also, where it is well known, is admitted as valid. If you cannot (as it were) write your name in fair and legible letters, set down some mark, if it were but two scores or lines in any form or figure; if ye cannot act faith so distinctly, come on as you may; if ye cannot to your satisfaction say, Yea, with the heart, say it with the mouth, striving and longing to have thy heart brought up; force thyself (if I may speak so) to believing: 'If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe with thy heart that God raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved,' Rom. x. 9. Endeavour to make thy mouth engage thine heart; bind thyself fast to Christ, even in a manner whether thou wilt or not: Act faith with the understanding, labouring honestly to bring up thy will and affections; and, tho' ye win not now to a faith that is distinct, it shall come in a due time: Essay to set open the door, and it shall go with you.

OBJECT. But my heart says, All these are but fair words. ANSW. Away with that blasphemy. They are the truths of God: Essay then, O essay seriously this way of believing, and ye shall find power meeting you. The pen is, as it were, lying by you; and albeit ye cannot write well and be distinct, take the pen, and Christ shall (as it were) lead your hand, and guide it to write so as it shall pass in heaven for a subscribed consent: Set yourselves to give him a welcome, and he shall account it to be a welcome. Say now, what more ye have to say; lay out your scruples; this word, 'All things are ready,' will answer them all: The garment is ready to be put on, yea, Jesus Christ is your Wedding-garment, take and put him on: He is the cure for all your diseases, apply him for the cure of them all. Ye cannot certainly be clothed, before you put on the garment; neither can ye be healed, before ye apply the cure; ye cannot by any means be rich, till ye marry him. But, beside all these there are several other needlessly disquieting scruples, there are many other shifts (and, alas! that there should be such trifling, if I may call it so, such whining, as it were, and standing on ceremonies (to speak so) with our Lord!) among which this is one, I wot not if I be in the covenant and contract

of redemption, I know not if I be one of God's elect. **Ans^w.** What is this? ye know not well what ye say: Have ye any thing to do with that secret by a leap and at first hand? Are ye not called to marry Christ? is not that his revealed will to you? I protest, in his name, this is the thing that ye are called to; and will ye make an exception, where he has made none? Or, will ye shift obedience to a clear command, upon a supposed decree, which you cannot know but by the effects? Will ye reason so in the matter of your eating and drinking? Upon a supposition that God hath decreed that ye shall die tomorrow, or within a few days; will ye this day not take your dinner, nor make use of any refreshment, till that supposed day come? Or, because ye know not if God hath appointed you to live so and so long, will ye forbear therefore your callings? Or, will any of you, in seeking after a match in the world, reason so? Will ye not seek after nor marry such a woman, till ye be clear that God hath decreed her to be your wife? When or whom would ye marry at this rate of reasoning? But, 2. Because there is a sort of faculty and facility here to dispute against God, I answer by way of question, Were there ever any that had that doubt cleared to them before they came to Christ? Who ever would have come to him, if they had stayed till that had been taken out of the way? Or, hath the Lord told that to any before they came? Hath he said to them, Believe, for ye are elected? But his method is thus, Believe, and ye shall know in due time that ye are elected. 3. Is there any that can say, that the offer or the refusal of the match depended on this? If any of you will say, Because I was not elected, he refused me; he will answer, 'How often would I have gathered you?' And there will need no more ground for sentencing professors of the gospel to destruction, than this, Man, woman, thou hadst the offer of the Gospel, and refusedst it: therefore go to thy place: He will not judge you according to the decree of reprobation, but according to his call, and your disobedience to it. And further, ye may take Christ's Answer to this Objection, from John vi. 39. where there are two Wills, or rather two things willed, of equal extent betwixt the Father and Christ in the covenant of redemption, under which all the elect come: The First is, ver 39.

'This is the Father's WILL which hath sent me, that of all that he hath given me, I should lose nothing:' But, as if he had said, This is not it that ye have to do with at first-hand; therefore, ver. 40. he says, 'And this is the WILL of him that sent me, that every one that seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life:' Not that all the elect should know that they are elected, before they believe; but that he that believes in him, may know that he is elected. He gives the same promise to them that believe, that is given to them that are elected: And they are distinguished, because he would have them to come under distinct considerations.

And now, to conclude, Is there not need, great need to come? and have ye not good warrant to come? Lay by, therefore, seeking satisfaction to sense and carnal reason: And, while the Lord says, 'All things are ready, come to the marriage;' it will be greatly to your prejudice, to sit or shift the invitation. Ye have the contract laid before you, alter not the terms, dispute not, delay not: This is our commission to you to-day; we tell you, that the King hath made ready for the feast, yea, all things are ready; come then, and let there be no more debate about the matter. If ye will but say it, and say it in earnest, 'Here, Lord Jesus, I give up myself to thee: and, though my consent be now but confused, I shall endeavour, thro' grace, to give it more clearly and distinctly another time:' it shall go well with you: Only deliver up yourselves to him; and, in the Lord's name, I tell you, that ye shall be dearly welcome. As many as come humbly loathing themselves, wondring at the free grace of God, and highly esteeming of precious and lovely Jesus, and adventuring to hazard their souls on him on his own terms, and to take him for their Husband and Lord: it shall not be accounted presumption in them so to do: Nay, (as it is, Cant. iii.) 'The bottom of his chariot is paved with love,' and 'tis 'for the daughters of Jerusalem:' it is made for carrying and keeping believers. Leap hither (if I may speak so) and ye will fall soft, into a sweetly perfumed and soft bed, even in the arms of Christ. There was never a carpet, never a feather or down bed so soft as that is: only come and cast yourselves over on it. Tho' ye think that ye cannot apprehend and take hold of him, he can and will apprehend and

take hold of you: and he is so very tender-hearted, that he will kiss you, and even weep over you for joy, (as it were) on your neck: And if ye have no garments, rings or jewels (to speak so) to adorn you, he will give these to you. Come forward then, come, O! come, and let it be a day of covenanting with him: And, in sign and token thereof, give up your names to him: and, for confirmation, take the seal of his covenant, the sacrament with your hand, and bless him with your heart, that so heartily welcomes you: And the blessing of God shall come upon you that come on these terms.



S E R M O N IV.

Preached after the Communion,

On PHILIP i. 27.

Only let your Conversation be as it becometh the Gospel of Christ.

THERE are two great works that the ministers of the gospel have to do: One is to engage people to Christ, and to persuade them to receive him and close with him: the other is to induce them to walk worthy of him, Col. ii. 6 'As ye have (saith the apostle) received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him.' Paul, thro' the hand of the Lord with him, had engaged the Philippians to close with Christ, and, as it were, to conclude the contract betwixt him and them; and now, being aged and in prison, and not knowing certainly if ever he shall see them again, he commends this to them in a special manner, whether he see them or be absent from them, that 'only they would let their conversation be as becometh the gospel of Christ:' As if he had said, Ye are privileged with the

gospel, and have embraced it, and are eminent in the profession thereof; let me therefore beg this of you, that your conversation may be answerable to it. The adverb, **ONLY**, intimates to them, that this was so necessary and of so great concernment, that in a manner it was their **ONE THING** they had to do, in comparison of which, in a manner, they had no other thing else to do, whether he were present or absent; this, in some respect, is all that he requires of them: And the argument whereby he presseth it is, 'that whether he come to them or not, he may hear of their affairs;' and that he desires and expects, whether he be at liberty, or in prison and bonds, that they will thus especially testify their respect to him; which would be more refreshing and acceptable to him, than their communicating to him in his affliction, beyond all the rest of the Churches, was, and for which he commends them, Chap. iv. And in the close of the verse he instanceth two particulars, wherein he would have their conversation suiting the gospel; or two qualifications of a gospel-conversation and walk: One is, **UNITY**, that they 'stand fast in one spirit.' Another is, **PURITY** in the faith, 'that with one mind they strive together for the faith of the gospel.'

The First qualification is, joint and united stayedness and steadfastness, that they be not fleeting and wavering to and fro, easily disjointed and divided one from another, as many light professors are: And the Second is, that they be studious in and striving for the purity of the doctrine of faith, and serious in the practice and exercise of faith; desirable and excellent qualifications of a Christian, viz. purity, solidity, and seriousness in religion.

We shall at this time speak of the exhortation, 'Only let your conversation be as becometh the gospel of Christ.' Where, by conversation, we understand the whole of a man's carriage and walk towards and before God and men; and by the gospel, the whole doctrine thereof, as it respects faith and manners or practice; but here more especially, as it respects faith in Christ, both as it is opposed to Heathenism, and as 'tis opposed to the law or covenant of works: To walk then as becometh the gospel, is to walk answerably and suitably to it, and in the whole of their carriage and deportment to make a manifest difference to appear betwixt

themselves and all other persons, as they are dignified, and as the gospel requireth.

The point of Doctrine, to which we would speak from these words, and which lieth obviously in them, is, "That they who are privileged with the gospel, ought seriously to endeavour, and to make it their great business, to have their conversation suitable to, and becoming the same." This is some way the ONE THING required of all the hearers of the gospel of all that are baptized in the name of Christ. We need not stay on the proof and reasons of it, and the less, that none will dare down-right to deny it, and that the reasons are so obvious.

There are Three USES of it, that we would speak a little to: The First is for instruction, to teach us our duty: The Second is of regret and expostulation, that the professors of the gospel, and of the name of Christ, should be so unlike and unanswerable to it: The Third is of exhortation to this so very necessary and so much called-for a duty, as the compend of all duties, which we would press and set home by some considerations drawn from the necessity and advantage of it.

As for the First, I think I may say, that, if ye had the apostle Paul preaching to you who have been communicants yesterday, this would be the great duty which he would enforce upon you, 'Only let your conversation be as it becomes the gospel of Christ.' Ye will readily say, What is that? I confess 'tis hard to tell, 'tis so very marrowy and comprehensive; but it will be as hard to practise it, and a great deal harder. O that we were all breathing and pressing seriously and hard after it! However, we shall in the first place, and in the general, desire you to consider these few scriptures that hold it out, as namely, Luke i. 74, 75. 2 Cor. vii. 1. Tit ii. 10, 11, 12. 1 Pet. i. 15. Philip. iii. 20.

More particularly, from other scriptures ye may take it up in these; or, if we read and consider the gospel aright, we will find these Five things in it, which require a walk suitable, or a walk with respect to them, and such a walk becomes the gospel. 1. In the substance of it, our blessed Lord Jesus is (as it were) the Text on whom the gospel is a notable commentary; and what he did, and how he suffered, is proposed as a fair copy for us to write after, in all things whereina he is set forth to us as a Pattern for our

imitation. 2. That from whence the gospel comes, and which gives it its rise, even the love of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, in whose blessed breast it bred; and to 'walk as it becomes the gospel,' is to walk suitably to that love. 3. To walk as becomes the gospel, is to walk suitably to the great offers of it, and to the promises contained in it, the 'exceeding great and precious promises, whereby we are made partakers of the divine nature;' to walk suitably to all the excellent things, the sublimely spiritual and divine things promised. 4. It is to walk suitably to the commands and directions of the gospel, in reference to all duties: 'Having therefore (saith the apostle, 2 Cor. vii. 1) these promises, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.' 5. It is to walk answerably to the obligations which the gospel lays on us, and to the consolations that flow from it to us. If then we would walk as becomes the gospel of Christ, we must have a due respect unto all all these.

If it should be enquired, What is it to have a respect to these in our walk? We answer, It supposeth and includeth these things. 1. A likeness and conformity; that what is called for in the matter of duty, or offered in the promise, we study to be like it:—"We all (saith the apostle, 2 Cor. iii. 18.) beholding as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord." 2. Our suffering none of these things to ly by us unimproved, and our endeavouring to make the right use of them; to suffer none of the promises relating to justification, sanctification, or any other spiritual privilege and benefit to be useless, but to be laying due weight on each of them: And more especially, to be making right use of Christ the Mediator, "in whom all the promises are yea and amen;" (for certainly they neither walk as it becomes the gospel, nor are worthy of it, who make no use of him) to be making right use of the Ordinances, word and sacraments, and of all appointed means of edification, publick, private and secret; and to be making right use of the comforts of the gospel, whereof there is thro' Christ a very large and liberal allowance on Christians. 3. It includes our delighting ourselves in the gospel, our endeavour-

ing to be cheerful, to be cheered and made glad by the good things in it. A heartless, drooping and discouraging life and walk is very unbecoming the gospel of Christ.

We may, in a word, briefly sum up a Christian's conversation as becometh the gospel, in these Three: 1. That he shine in his conversation, so as he may adorn the gospel. 2. That he improve, by the exercise of faith, the promises of it. 3. That he endeavour to live on the comforts of it, and to live in the hope and expectation of the comfort and refreshing from the presence of the Lord, and the fulness of joys therein, that are coming. Somewhat of all these Three is touched in those words, Acts ix. 31. "Then the Churches had rest, and were edified, and walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comforts of the Holy Ghost, were multiplied:" They walked in the fear of God, in respect of their practice; and, in respect of their faith, they walked 'in the comfort of the Holy Ghost;' and they were edified, grew and increased, not only in respect of their number, but as to their spiritual state and stature: And thus, "the peace of God, which passeth understanding, guarded their minds and hearts through Christ Jesus."

Or we may look on the gospel as calling for these Two things, in our external and visible conversation: 1. That none get any occasion by our walk to reproach the gospel: That none may have it, or any just ground given by us, to say, Take up such a professor of the gospel. O what prejudice to the profession of the gospel, is done this way, by the untender walk of many of its professors! 2. It is to walk so, as our carriage may be a commendation to the gospel, and an ornament to the profession of it: That, not only reproachers may be ashamed, who falsely accuse our good conversation; but, by beholding of it, they may be made to glorify God: That we may shine as lights, by our blameless walk; so holding forth the word of life (being practical preachers) by our convincing and edifying carriage, in our several capacities, callings, stations and relations: that they who are not won by the word, may be won to the love of Christ, and of holiness, by our exemplary conversation, and by the humble, tender and conscientious discharge of the duties of those callings and relations; the husband being kind, and the wife tractable, child and servant

obedient, &c. Excellent directions to this purpose are given by the apostles, and particularly by Paul and Peter, in their Epistles.

More particularly (which will yet be but somewhat general) we may consider the gospel, 1. As it holds forth and calls for holiness, and so, for a holy and gospel-becoming conversation. And, 2. We would take a view of the nature of this holiness.

FIRST, The gospel calls for holiness in a six fold extent; a failing or defect in any of which, makes a conversation, in so far, to be unbecoming the gospel. 1. It calls for holiness in respect of all sorts of duties; "Be ye holy (saith Peter, 1 Pet. i. 15) in all manner of conversation, as God is holy:" in prosperity and adversity; in religious, in moral, and in natural actions: "For it is written, Be ye holy, for I am holy." 2. It is extended universally to all particular and individual duties and actions of all those sorts; it reacheth all manner of conversation. The divinely inspired scriptures instruct the man of God, how he may be made perfect in every good work; as it is, 2 Tim. iii. And a failing in thought, word or deed, is unbecoming the gospel. 3. It is extended in respect of the subject, viz. the whole man, and presseth that he be sanctified throughout: So, 1 Thess. v. 23. the apostle prays, "The God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God, your whole spirit, soul and body, be preserved blameless." And, 2 Cor. vii. 1. it puts to "cleanse from all filth of the flesh and spirit:" It requires that the Judgment be kept sound, and that no error or untruth be admitted by it; that the Mind be sober, and free from any sinful distemper; that the Affections be sanctifiedly regular, and that they debord not; that the Will be straight, and brought up to the straight rule of obedience; and that the Conscience be kept tender, that it be neither darkened nor impure: That the Members of the Body be yielded as instruments unto righteousness. 4. It is extended to holiness, in respect of all capacities, callings, stations and relations; of husbands and wives, of masters and servants, of parents and children; as the apostle Paul heartily and frequently doth in his Epistles, namely, Col. iii. and iv. Eph. v. and vi. Tit. ii. where he presses it upon servants by this argument, "That the doctrine of God may

not be blasphemed ;” and on all thus, “ That the grace of God hath appeared in the gospel,” (for that very end.)

5. It is extended in respect of all times and places. 1 Cor. xv. ult. we are commanded “ always to abound in the work of the Lord ;” in the whole tract of our conversation, at home and abroad, in secret and publick, in prosperity and adversity. 6. ’Tis extended to, and requireth perfect holiness, holiness at the highest pitch : So, Matth. v. “ Be ye perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect :” And, 1 Pet. i. 15. “ Be ye holy in all manner of conversation, as God that calleth you is holy :” To be at exact holiness, even to have it perfect in respect of degrees, in our design, desire and endeavour ; “ to be purifying ourselves, even as he is pure,” (as it is, 1 John iii. 3.) having him for our Pattern.

If any should here Object, and say, To look on the gospel thus, as carving out a Christian’s duty and walk so very exactly, in this extent and at this pitch, makes it appear to be very strict, and to differ little or nothing from the law ; for what more doth that call for ? so that this doctrine seems to be legal. I answer, This Objection seems to imply a great mistake : For the difference betwixt the law and the gospel is not so much (if at all) in this, that the law requires more than the gospel ; but that it requires what it calls for, on another certification. The law and the gospel agree in these Three : 1. The gospel requires holiness in as large an extent as the law ; so that whatever is a sin against the law, is also a sin against the gospel ; for Christ “ came not to abolish, but to fulfil the law.” 2. It requires holiness at the same pitch, or in the same degree ; for the gospel commands us to “ be holy as God is holy, and to be perfect as our heavenly Father is perfect :” It dispenseth with no sin, nor with any degree of any sin, nor with the least omission of any duty, more than doth the law. 3. The authority and obligation, that lies on, and binds to holiness, is no less in the gospel, than it is in the law ; yea, we may say, that the obligation is in some respect greater.

But they differ in these Three : 1. That the gospel taketh in the penitent, tho’ he hath not been perfect and exact, and gives him pardon thro’ Christ : Which the law doth not. 2. The gospel calleth for duty in the strength of Christ, and furnisheth strength for duty : But the law now

furnisheth no strength, but only supposeth it; it only giveth out the word of command, requiring of men that they walk in the strength which they had once in Adam. So that, tho' the authority and obligation be the same, yet the manner and certification is not the same. If there be any breach or failing, the law says, "Thou shalt certainly die:" But the gospel (as I said) admits of repentance, and fleeing to Jesus Christ, "who took on him the curse of the law." 3. The law accepts of no duty, if it be not exactly perfect in the degree: But the gospel accepts of duty, tho' imperfect, if there be sincerity; it accepts, on Christ's account, of "a man, according to that which he hath, if there be a willing mind." So then, when ye are called to walk "as becomes the gospel," ye would know that ye are not to dispense with yourselves, in the least, in any duty that the law calleth for; tho' the gospel doth indeed more sweetly call for it, its "exactors and officers being peace and righteousness:" It is the same holiness in the matter, extent and degree, which the gospel calleth for, with that of the law; tho' it much differeth as to the manner of calling for it.

SECONDLY, That we may know what is called for in the gospel; as a walk or conversation becoming the same, and so may yet further know the nature of gospel-holiness, (which was the Second thing we proposed to speak to) ye would consider the gospel, as it is distinguished from the law, and as it holds out grace: Where we would speak, 1. Of some qualifications, that the gospel addeth, as to the performance of the same duties which the law requires. 2. Of some particular duties which it doth more especially call for, and which were not (several of them, at least) so proper to the law.

As for the qualifications of duty, which the gospel addeth, they are these: (1.) A new end; for our end in duty now is, not to gain life by it, but simply to glorify God, as we may see, 1 Cor. x. 31. I will not say but this end was in the covenant of works; but in the gospel this is not only the main end, but some way the only end, and the other quite excluded and thrust out; and, when we speak of the Glory of God, we take in the glory of grace, and the glory of the Redeemer, who furnisheth grace.

(2.) It adds a sweet motive, viz. love to Jesus Christ; 'The love of Christ (saith the apostle, 2 Cor. v. 14.) constraineth us.' It is no more mere awe, that is the motive; but love, and love to God in Christ, who hath redeemed and bought us. (3.) The gospel qualifies our obedience and walk, as to our undertaking thereof; that it be not in our own strength, but in the strength of Jesus Christ: It teacheth us to go through the wilderness 'leaning on the Beloved,' and leaving the burden of the work on him; trusting more to him, than to our own feet or strength, as knowing that we cannot cripple out the way, nor do any thing without him, as it is, John xv. 5. (4.) There is a qualification required in respect of the frame of our own heart, with respect to a twofold fear: One is a filial and reverential fear, that proceeds from faith, in which we are "to work out the work of our salvation;" the other is, that it be without the fear that is opposite to the former, as the word is, Luke i. 74. The gospel calleth us, in our walk, to have a fear without fear; a reverential fear without slavish fear: It would have us neither to be altogether afraid because of the law, which hath terror; nor to be without filial fear, for that is presumption; but to have faith and fear mixed together. (5.) The gospel qualifies our walk in spiritual duties, in respect of cheerfulness in going about them, which are to us (in so far as we have corruption in us) heavy and grievous; but the gospel maketh them easy and light, as it is said, Matth. xi. ult. "His yoke is easy, and his burden light. Tho' it be a yoke, yet it is portable and light, when Christ and the believer are yoked together; nor are "any of his commands grievous," as it is, 1 John v. 3. (6.) Tho' the gospel call for holiness, yet it makes the person to be denied to it: It is a gospel-walk, to be holy; but it takes in that with it which we have, Phil. iii. to "forget those things that are behind," to be denied and dead to all our attainments, and "to count all but loss and dung for Christ." It was indeed a law-walk, to be blameless; but it is a gospel-walk, to study to be blameless, and pressing hard after perfect holiness, and yet to forget it, and to be denied to all conceit of it; and to be desirous to "be found in Christ Jesus, not having our own righteousness which is by the law, but the righteousness which is by faith."

As for the particular duties, at least some of the duties, that are more particularly called for in this walk and "conversation becoming the gospel;" ye may take these shortly. The First whereof is, A living by faith; and that is, when a Christian hath faith, and the exercise of it on Christ, as it were another life to him: For tho' there was a life of faith, or of dependence on God, in Adam before the fall; yet not the life of faith in a Redeemer: "I live (saith the apostle, Gal. ii. 20.) yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life that now I live in the flesh, is by faith on the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." And this is to be taken along the Christian's walk, even a continued application to and of Christ: This is that which he first betakes himself to, for righteousness; yea, when right, he employs him constantly, as "he is made of God to him wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption," as he is said to be made to believers, 1 Cor. i. 30. The Second is, The exercise of repentance, which was not called for as a duty by the law, tho' much ruin followed the breach of it: This was the sum of John's and of Christ's preaching, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." Tho' it be, alas! a very much slighted exercise yet daily repentance notably suiteth "a conversation becoming the gospel." 3dly, A gospel-conversation would be in and with the exercise of hope. There was love to God under the law, but not so properly the exercise of hope: there was, it is true, hope in respect of the thing promised, in case there had been no violation of the law; but not as respecting Christ Jesus, who is the believer's hope, Col. i. 27. "Christ in you the hope of glory." I doubt much if the exercise of hope be well known to Christians in this generation; few know what it is to "hope to the end," as Peter exhorts, 1 Pet. i. 13. A Fourth is, The denial of ourselves, and the exercise of humility; for as the gospel calleth for the denying of our own righteousness, so for the denying of our own wills, affections, lusts, appetites, and desires. There is another sort of love-singleness and deniedness called for now, than under the law; because "we are bought with a price, and are not our own," as it is, 1 Cor. vi. 20. "If any man will follow me, let him deny himself," saith our Lord, Matth. xvi. A Fifth is, Much mortification, that we be crucified to the world, to ourself, and to our sinful lusts.

“I am crucified (saith Paul, Gal. ii.) with Christ, yet I live.” So, Chap. vi. he tells us, “that he was crucified to the world, and the world to him:” And he exhorts Christians, Col. iii. 5. to “mortify their members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, covetousness,” &c. A Sixth is, Much patience, meekness, forbearance, long-suffering, wherein our Lord hath given and left himself for a none-such Pattern, Matth. xi. 29. “Learn (saith he) of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart.” So, 1 Pet. ii. 21, 22. And hence, meekness, patience and forbearance are so much and so frequently called for in the gospel, and on gospel-grounds, as great duties becoming the gospel, or as special pieces of a gospel conversation. The Seventh is, A heavenliness in our conversation, a deniedness, a holy abstractness from earthly things, and living in heaven, while on earth; and a living more where we love, than where we live: “If ye be risen with Christ, (saith the apostle, Col. iii. 1.) set your affections on things above, not on things on the earth:” Which is also called for, Philip. iii. 20. by his own example, proposed for our pattern, “Our conversation (saith he) is in heaven, whence we look for the Saviour.” To be much in our affections set on the things that are on the earth, to be earthly-minded, is unbecoming the gospel. An Eighth is, A great eye on eternity: an eye, whose looks are not bounded within time, but pierce thorow time, and all the fogs, mists, and clouds that are in it. ’Tis much unbecoming the gospel, to have our hope much (not to say, only) in this life, or to be much taken up about the driving of earthly designs and projects: but it is a good qualification of a gospel-conversation, to have an eye before us on eternal life, 2 Cor. iv. ult. “While (saith the apostle) we look not on the things that are seen, but on the things that are not seen, and eternal.” A Ninth is, Much joy in God, much cheerfulness and heartforness; therefore believers are willed to “rejoice alway and evermore:” So, 1 Thess. v. “Rejoice evermore;” and, Philip. iv. 4. “Rejoice in the Lord alway, and again, I say, rejoice;” which he so much presses on them, because (as it is like) he knew that they were given to walk-droopingly and heavily, which did not so become the gospel, as rejoicing in God, singing and making melody in their hearts to him, cheering themselves in him, and “delighting them-

selves in the Almighty." A Tenth is, Spiritual contentment: A contented conversation is a "conversation becoming the gospel: Be careful for nothing (saith the apostle, Philip. iv. 6) but in every thing let your requests be made known unto God, by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving." And then follows downward a little, "I have learned in every state or case to be content: I know how to suffer want, and how to abound." This conversation was very becoming the gospel; he proposes himself as a pattern herein to them. There are many professors of religion, who cannot have, but they are vain; and, when they want, they are anxious and discouraged; 'tis hard to carry the cup even: But a gospel-conversation is equal, sober and composed, and not much up with having, nor much down with want; nor is it easily outwitted and non-plussed by the vicissitudes of those external things. An Eleventh is, Watchfulness. A gospel-conversation is a watchful conversation, and never much surprised or moved: Or thus, Watching (especially over the heart) joined with prayer, is a peculiar duty, that a walk becoming the gospel calls for, that we be not found like the slothful servant, when his lord cometh. This is a duty well-becoming us who live under the gospel, because we have readily stronger corruptions, and are at least under more temptations, than those who lived under the law. A Twelfth is, Much self-examination or self-searching, because of much corruption in us, and much guilt lying on us, is a duty which the gospel calls for; that we may see what comes of it, how it is mortified and done away: And, there being many promises in our offer, we should see what acceptation they get, and how they are embraced; there is hazard of mistaking our spiritual state, &c. All which calls us to be much in this duty, "Examine yourselves, prove your own selves," as says the apostle, 2 Cor. xiii. 5. 13thly, The "making of our calling and election sure," becomes the gospel. When we are hovering, and at an uncertainty as to our soul's estate, we are not only to try it, but to endeavour to put it out of question; "I write these things to you (says John 1 Epist. v. 13.) that ye believe, that ye may know that ye have eternal life." Ye would not only believe, but study to know that ye believe, that ye may comfort yourselves in it: And it is a piece of a conversation and walk unbecoming the gospel, to hang loose

in suspense, and at an uncertainty, in that greatest and gravest business. 14thly, Trusting in God, becomes the gospel; and unbelief and distrust of God, is unbecoming the gospel. "Said I not unto thee, (saith the Lord to Martha, John xi.) That if thou wouldst believe, thou shouldst see the glory of God?" To have a gracious offer from God, and to scar at it, as if he were not in earnest, is very unbecoming the gospel: Whenever he pipeth, it becomes us well to dance; and to believe and credit him, when he speaks fair and comfortably. 15thly, A gospel conversation takes in, and calls for, not only holiness, but a shining exemplary holiness, holiness with a divine lustre and splendor on it. Merely legal holiness is dim and dark, and hath little or no lustre; therefore believers are called "children of the light, and of the day;" and they are said to "shine as lights, in the midst of a crooked generation." It is not only a conversation not spotted, or that is something well-favoured; but such a conversation, that is well-lyned (to speak so) within, with the imputed righteousness of Christ, and much inherent grace and holiness, and with outward self-denied visible splendor and glory: "Let your light (saith the Lord, Matth. v.) so shine before men, &c." Even as the glory of his body, when he was transfigured on the mount, made his clothes to shine; so there is something of grace within, that makes the external actions and carriage of believers to shine: And words that will be very tasteless and sapless from others, tho' for the matter good, will have another sort of relish and weight from them; and prayer from their mouth will have another sort of refreshful sweetness. 16thly, A gospel conversation takes in, and calls for, much joy in affliction and tribulation: "We rejoice in tribulation," saith the apostle: It will make the Christian "take joyfully the spoiling of his goods," as they did, Heb. x. 34. It will make men "come from the presence of councils, rejoicing that they are accounted worthy to suffer for the name of Christ," as it did the apostles, Acts v. last. "My brethren (says James) count it all joy, when ye fall into divers temptations," or tribulations: It makes pleasant and heartsome bearing of crosses from God, and of injuries from men; it makes the Christian stoop humbly and very low to these; it will not suffer him to render evil for evil, but will put him to do good for evil, and it makes him do it on a gospel-

ground and account: because Christ frankly forgave the Christian ten thousand talents of his debt, he is ready to forgive an hundred pence of petty and inconsiderable injuries done against him. 17thly, A gospel-conversation is a sweet, quiet, peaceable, well-humoured conversation: It makes men and women good to live with; it hath much love and pity to them that are without; it is a good neighbour; it is a great friend to unity, and a great enemy to division: It presses hard after "standing fast in one spirit." 18thly, A gospel conversation implies a settled fixed condition, that is not fleeting and wavering; it suffers not Christians to be one thing to-day, and another thing to-morrow, very unbecoming the gospel: A gospel-conversation will not suffer a man to be a temporizer, or one that cometh and goeth with every turn of the tide, to be of any party that is upmost; but puts to "stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made him free." The believer's heart is fixed, and his conversation is stable, when it is as it becometh the gospel. 19thly, It is a bold conversation, that will fear at no trial for Christ, but will hazard and venture far, ere it expose the gospel to contempt and reproach; therefore it is said, Philip. i. 'In nothing being terrified by your adversaries:' It is very loth to do or to forbear any thing, that may make the gospel to be evil-spoken of. 20thly, It is a spiritual conversation, or a walking in the Spirit, as the word is, Gal. v. "Walk in the Spirit (saith the apostle) and ye shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh." And, ver. 25. "If we live in the Spirit, let us walk in the Spirit." It makes us to pray in the Spirit, to praise in the Spirit; and, by assistance of the Spirit, it puts upon endeavours to do every thing that is called for. 21stly, A gospel-conversation is a wrestling and fighting conversation, striving and warring against temptations without, and a body of death within. A lazy, secure, whole-hearted conversation, when a person is lying by, and is not setting himself against, nor purifying himself from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, but at truce with corruption, is not (sure) becoming the gospel: Hence the apostle, Rom. vii. hath such a combate with the remainder of indwelling corruption, sometimes complaining of, sometimes protesting against it, and sometimes bitterly bemoaning and crying out under its captivating power: There being in the believer two contrary parties, one of grace,

and another of corrupt nature, which are contrary one to another, as it is, Gal. v. 17. a believer; in a gospel-conversation, is like Jacob's and Esau's struggling in the womb: It is for this cause that, Eph. vi. all the pieces of the spiritual armour are particularly described, and Christians, as Christ's soldiers, commanded to put them on; and to have a gospel-conversation, is to be improving all the pieces of that compleat armour of God aright, to their several ends.

These are things (and such others) that are particularly called for in a gospel-walk and conversation: And if we would take a little view of them altogether, and gather the meaning of this Use of Instruction from the exhortation, "Let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ;" the sum of it may be briefly given in these Four, 1. To be exactly studying holiness. 2. To be denied to our holiness, as Paul was, Philip. iii. 3. To be especially taken up with those particular duties, of living by faith, of exercising repentance, of aiming at, and closely pursuing after communion with God in Christ Jesus; (which is, tho' a much abused duty, and unworthily prostituted in the mouths of many a most precious both duty and privilege) exercising hope, self-denial, &c. so that we may be in case warrantably to say with the apostle, 1 John i. 4. "Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ." 4. To be much in the exercise of all these heartily and cheerfully; and to be comforted and refreshed in doing duty, and yet denied to all our doing. A Christian, having a suitable conversation to the gospel, sees his ills, and is humbled; observes God's goodness, and comforts himself, and blesses God heartily for his goodness in respect of both, and because there is hope of an outgate from all his evils, and a day coming when he shall be finally and fully redeemed from all his iniquities.

The Second Use leads us to regret and expostulate with hearers and professors of the gospel, of this time. Tho' this be the thing, and the only thing, that they are called to; yet, if we should go thorow and view the conversation of the most part, O how very unsuitable, and unbecoming is it to the gospel! even so very unsuitable, that, if our hearts were tender, they would break and bleed within us to behold it. But, alas! it is a part of our unsuitableness, that we cannot suitably lament it: Little zeal for God, and

sorrow for what dishonours him, and reflects on the profession of his name, are much gone from this generation. Oh! whither shall we go, into the city or country, to find a conversation becoming the gospel? We cannot be without some conviction, that we ought to be zealous for the glory of God, and serious in the study of holiness in all manner of conversation, that the gospel be not reproached and blasphemed: If we be so, and if such a conversation be a duty, and a very reasonable duty, how comes it to be so little minded and made conscience of? If we profess Christ to be our Husband and Head, our Captain and Leader, ought we not to be like him, and follow him? I take it for granted, that this will be generally assented to, as being very just and reasonable; and yet, without accomplishing a very diligent search into our own way, may we not find at the first view, much, very lamentably much unsuitableness in our walk to the gospel? Need we descend to particulars? is not our unsuitableness obvious, palpable and undeniable? Let me but ask ourselves a few questions: Are we making suitable use of the promises, and often meditating on them? are we taken up with delighting ourselves in God, and in the great and excellent things contained in the promises? do we study to be like them, and suitably to improve them? do we study to have those poor performances of duty that we go about, so qualified as the gospel calls for? The lifelessness and whole-heartedness, that manifestly discover themselves in our very hearing of these things, declare much what we are: Your ministers are some way perplexed and puzzled how to deal with you, and know not well whether to speak or to be silent, whether to pipe or to mourn. What suitableness is there to the gospel, when the conversation of many is so spotted? So far, alas! are we from shining, that we are rather like blind lanterns without light. I shall only, for whetting an edge on this regret and expostulation, instance in a few of these particulars touched on before, as to our suitableness to the gospel. (1) Do we live by faith? Alas! is there such a life as this known by most of us? We are readily either living securely, carelessly and unconcernedly, without troubling ourselves with such matters: or else, on the other hand, we give way to unbelief, and will hardly admit of any thing that may settle

and make us foot a stand: We are found often running from one extremity to another; we are either carnally vain, light and frothy, or we are anxious, heartless and dejected, and are very seldom found steering a straight course betwixt extremes, and stemming the port. (2.) We may instance it in the exercise of repentance, which well becomes the gospel: Our LORD CHRIST, John the Baptist, and the Apostles preached it, and 'tis commended to all; 'tis an exercise very suitable and proper for sinners, and more especially for such sinners as have had many offers of grace, and have much slighted them: But where is it? ah! where is it? Converts are rare in these days, and among converts the kindly exercise of repentance is rare; we are generally as whole-hearted, as if we were living under the covenant where there is no promise of pardon to a penitent sinner. I mean not every sort of repentance, for there is a worldly sorrow that works death; there is a legal repentance, arising mainly, if not only, from the fear of punishment: But I mean of serious and hearty gospel-repentance, arising from the consideration of God's holiness, and of his mercy and grace in Jesus Christ, that is accompanied with holy zeal, fear, indignation and revenge, as it is described, 2 Cor. vii. (3.) Where is self-denial? Is not that a rare thing? Many of us cannot bear a word reflecting on Self, neither can we quit a word once uttered by us, (tho' it may be somewhat rashly and unadvisedly) wherein Self is concerned, but will needs maintain and defend it: O what reeling and whirling-about with the time is there among us? What hard pursuing after, and even chasing of self-interests and designs? (4.) Where is spiritual joy and rejoicing in the Lord? Who delight themselves in the Almighty? Who bless themselves on earth, in the God of truth? Who do really and humbly boast in him all the day long? who bless themselves in, and think themselves well come to, with precious Jesus Christ as their Mediator and Redeemer, as their Lord, Head, and Husband? who rejoice and glory in the midst of tribulation, in the hope of the glory of God? Joy in external things is much withered away from us, and it is just with God that it should be so, since we live so great strangers to the 'joy of the Lord,' which is 'our strength.' Upon but a very overly-trial, we will easily discover, that

there's amongst us none, or but very little, spiritual joy in God; I mean not only nor so much of sensible joy, as of our little active stirring up of ourselves to give obedience to that command concerning "rejoicing in God alway and evermore." May I not conclude then, that there is great ground of expostulation with us all, both believers and others, who may be convinced, that this lieth indispensibly on them, even to have a conversation as it becomes the gospel of Christ? ah, how little conscience is made of it! O mourn for and lament our shortcomings; as to this; and fall to the work, fall about it more than ever, as your main business, to have a conversation becoming the gospel. Many already are a reproach and a shame to the gospel, (and it will disclaim them) and, who shall live to see it, a great many more will be so: Alas! few or none of us all have a conversation as becomes the gospel; which is a lamentation, and should be for a lamentation.

The Third Use is of Exhortation, That seeing such a conversation is so much, and with such speciality called for, and yet so little seriously endeavoured by most; let me turn over to you the apostle's exhortation to the Philippians: If ye would know how to behave at home and abroad, in the duties of worship, and in the duties of your particular callings, stations and relations, even in all commanded duties; then, "Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ:" and beware of doing any thing that is unbecoming the gospel, or that may give ground to speak any ill of it; beware of letting the precious promises ly by you unimproved, but study to be like them: O study holiness in all manner of conversation; which is not only and simply to be holy, or to have holiness, but a holiness influenced by the gospel-promises in Christ, believingly improved, as the apostle exhorts, 2 Cor. vii 1. Not only to be externally holy, but to be in the exercise of the graces of the Spirit within; to cleanse from all filthiness of the spirit as well as of the flesh, especially to purify the heart, the fountain of pollution; even to study to be pure as he is pure; to aim at holiness in the strength of Christ, in the largest extent and in the highest pitch, and yet to be denied to it, and all vain conceit of it; even to account it but loss, in the point of justification before God; to be

in the practice of all the duties of religion sweetly, pleasantly, heartily and cheerfully, walking under all sorts of lots with a gospel-contentedness: This, O! this would be a conversation worthy of, and becoming the gospel; nay, it would make a little heaven on earth. And we desire to be as pressing and peremptory in calling for this from you, as ever we urgently pressed you by any call or invitation to receive the offer of the gospel, and of Christ therein; and if we were to speak to you all, O men and women, one by one, by name and surname, this would be our exhortation to you, "Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ."

We come now (as we promised) to press this on you by some few Considerations: And, 1. Consider the authority that enjoins it, and lays it on you; and if ye trust him, and expect the accomplishment of any promise of the gospel from him, then take this as proceeding from the same authority: Presume not, under the pain of God's displeasure, and of cheating your own souls to their ruin, to take or meddle with the promise, if ye mind not sincerely to study a suitableness in your conversation to the gospel. 2. Consider, not only the reasonableness of the thing, but also the sweet easiness of it; for, taking it in a gospel-sense, 'tis an easy yoke and a light burden: And 'tis withal very suitable and congruous to all professors of the gospel: Ought not a minister to be like his calling, a merchant to be like his calling, a tradesman to be like his trade and calling? Ought not also a Christian to be like his Christian calling, like the gospel which he professeth? 3. Consider the ties and obligations, that all who profess to have received the gospel, are under: Are ye not obliged to such a conversation, by your baptismal vow? Which obligation, tho' many of you forget, yet God will require it. Think ye that ye are free to live as ye list, to live like the gospel or not; or to take one piece of a gospel-walk, and leave another? Ye are professedly resigned to God in baptism, and are by it obliged to live every way as it becometh the gospel; and ye must either on the matter renounce your baptism and deny Christ, and so deal treacherously with him, or ye must make it your business to live like the gospel. 4. Consider, that this gospel will be the rule whereby ye shall be judged, whether ye have indeed received the Mediator, the promises and

privileges, the duties and directions, and the graces of it, and improved them, or not: "In the day (saith the apostle, Rom. ii.) that God shall judge the secrets of hearts by my gospel." If ye would have boldness when death and judgment come, endeavour a conversation becoming the gospel: Tho' your conversation were very much becoming the law, (as it is impossible now without gospel-grace) yet will not that satisfy the Judge; for ye will be judged both by the law and gospel. 5. Consider, that, tho' the Lord had required many hard things of you you would most certainly have been obliged to have performed them; and now, when he requires only this, ought ye not so much the more to aim at it, and endeavour it? Otherwise ye bring up an ill report on this gospel, as if it were an unsupportable heavy burden, and most uneasy yoke; for which ye must answer at your peril. Consider the dreadful doom and sentence of the slothful servant, who said, "He is a hard master." 6. Consider the great prejudice that a walk unbecoming the gospel hath with it. I cannot easily, nay not at all to the full, tell you the prejudice it will bring to you; only this I will say, that it had been better for you that ye had never heard the gospel; it had been better that ye never had been piped to by the gospel, and that ye had never heard any of its sweetest musick-springs, if (to follow the Lord's own similitude so far) ye endeavour not to keep all the measures thereof in your dancing after it, in your walking conform to it. Tell me, if we may be in earnest with you, what if ye were called even now or before night to give an account of your improving of, and profiting by the gospel, whereof ye have so very much, and from which ye have been so often piped unto, how utterly unanswerable would many of you be found to be? Your trifling way of walking alone and in your families, your neglecting of prayer in them, with the chiding and bitterness betwixt husbands and wives, and with and amongst servants; your omitting to instruct children and servants in the principles of religion: your tippling and mis-spending your time, declare sufficiently what your conversation is. If any of you shall say, The conversation that you press, is a harder work, and a more difficult task than we can win at: Is it any thing else, than what the Holy Ghost by the apostle

presseth on all the hearers of the gospel? O! take heed of branding a walk becoming the gospel with so black a note, as if it were an unsupportable yoke of intolerable hard bondage, lest it be said to you, 'Evil and slothful servants.' &c. If ye had been serious and diligent in making use of the gospel in a gospel way, by improving Christ and the promises, this work would have gone better with you, and ye had been in much better case than ye are in now: If ye had been more in the practice of gospel duties, and in the exercise of gospel-graces in secret, your visible conversation might and would have been much more as it becometh the gospel.

As for you that have communicate, there is a peculiar tie upon you: You have renewed your covenant with God, and is there any covenanting with God, but it hath this in it, That, if there be thereafter a falling-back, such back-siders come under the guilt of treacherous dealing with him? Let me, for a conclusion of this discourse say these few things to you: 1. Is it suitable, think ye, to fast the one day for your not walking as it becometh the gospel, and to take unjust liberty to yourselves the next day? on a fast-day to spue out your foul and abominable sins, and to return with the dog to his vomit in a few days thereafter? will ye be so unsuitable to your professions and confessions? Beware of that for the Lord's sake; better ye had never fasted nor confessed, than thus to mock the Lord. 2. Many of you have been at the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, and in it ye have professed that ye have taken Christ for your Husband, which implies the tie and obligation of a dutiful wife? What, I pray, is that, but to 'have a conversation as becometh the gospel,' and to 'walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called?' as the apostle exhorts, Eph iv. 1. And is there any straiter bond on earth whereby men can be bound? If, after thus covenanting with Christ, ye shall foully fail or fall back, will it not exceedingly aggrege your guilt? 3. Are there not of you who have come under some private engagements to the Lord? I take it for granted, if ye have not been scorning God in your humiliation, and in your communicating; I take it (I say) for granted, that severals of you have come under particular and personal engagements to God: If so, ye would beware of loosening those ties, and of violating those so solemn engagements; and the rather, that it is to be feared,

if ye keep not promise to God now, ye may never get a communion again to renew it. 4. I would have some of you remembering of those particular obligations ye came under, and promises that you made to us when you received your tokens, to amend those faults whereof ye were well known to be guilty: Most certainly those promises, especially so explicitly made, will bear witness against you, if those evils be continued in, or relapsed into; and we shall bear witness for Christ against you, if ye shall not be answerable to your engagements: For the Lord's sake, put us not to it.

Essay in good earnest, and set about the study of this gospel-becoming conversation: I shall forbear to speak of encouragements to this. It will be one good encouragement, to consider seriously, that it is a walk becoming the gospel and Christ in it; that it hath such promises made to it, and such a Surety for every promise; that the certification of the law is not at it; that ye have pardon of sin promised to you on your repentance, and furniture at hand for every thing called for from you. Take it in short, whatever your calling, station or relation be, "Only let your conversation be as becometh the gospel of Christ." And remember the ties and obligations that ye are under, whether more general or more particular; otherwise they shall be remembred to, and against you. Now, the Lord himself enable you, by his all sufficient grace, to suit all your obligations, to pay all your vows, and to make all your honest resolutions practicable, relating to this "Conversation becoming the gospel of Christ."



S E R M O N V.

Preached, if not after the COMMUNION, yet very pertinently for such an occasion (however it is subjoined to the immediately preceeding, because of the affinity of purposes.)

On PHILIP. iii. 20. *For our Conversation is in Heaven.*

THE life and work of a Christian is a far other thing than, for the most part, it is taken to be; and, no question, were we often thinking on, and studying the qualifications and extent of a Christian conversation, to which believers are called, we would walk with stopped mouths, in the deep sense of our great short-coming, and there would not be such delusion under the conceit of self-righteousness: But the ignorance of this, makes carnal men think themselves to be something; and makes even believers themselves, that they walk not so humbly, nor press so seriously towards the mark; neither do they propose to themselves, as they ought, a just and perfect pattern to follow.

Amongst other qualifications of a Christian walk and conversation, this is one, and a very considerable one, That "our conversation should be in heaven:" A thing we fear the most part of the Christians of this age scarcely believe, much less endeavour, that they should live with their hearts above in heaven, in the lively expectation of the Saviour's coming; that they should converse in heaven among the spirits of just men made perfect, before they come thither.

The scope of these words is plain. The apostle Paul hath to do with the Christian Philippians, who were much tempted, and, no doubt, in some hazard to be led aside

both from the faith and from the practice of religion; and the way that he takes to keep them right as to both, is by proposing his own example to them: As if he had said, Ye will readily think, that I should be well acquainted with the way to heaven; now, the way that I take for my justification before God, is not to seek after righteousness by the works of the law, but to be found in Christ covered with his righteousness taken hold of by faith: And, if ye would know what I do in reference to sanctification, this is it, "I forget those things that are behind, and reach forth unto those things that are before, pressing towards the mark for the prize; being constantly, as it were, on the spur, that I may attain that which I have not as yet come at, even that perfection of holiness, "that accompanies the resurrection from the dead." And having laid this before them, as a fair copy and pattern: he improves it, by exhorting them thus, "Brethren, be ye followers together of me;" take the way that I take, both in the matter of faith and of practice: And he gives two reasons why he would have them to do so; the first whereof is taken from the danger that was in following those false teachers, ver. 18, 19. "Many of whom walk so, as they are enemies to the cross of Christ," that is. enemies to the doctrine of faith in Christ, and to the exercise of it on him. and to the doctrine of his cross, and also to a truly spiritual walk, "whose end is destruction and whose god is their belly." The Second reason is subjoined in the text, drawn from the great advantage which they should have by following him: "For (saith he) our conversation is in heaven;" This is the spiritual, heavenly and divine walk, wherein he holds forth himself and his fellow-apostles as a pattern to be imitated by them, and so teacheth them their duty. We are not (as if he had said) like those false teachers, "But our conversation is in heaven;" therefore follow us. And he gives an instance of this in the latter part of the verse, "From whence (saith he) we look for the Saviour:" He is like a person on the watch-tower, that is looking and longing for the coming of a friend; plainly insinuating thereby, that he looks not for much satisfaction in this world, but was earnestly longing for, and in continual expectation of Christ's coming; to which all his hope and

expectation of compleat happiness, and of full satisfaction to his soul, was closely confined.

So then, the great thing that he aims at here, is to commend a heavenly conversation to these Christian Philippians, and to all that should hear the gospel, and this excellent piece of it amongst the rest.

There are only Two things shortly to be cleared, before we proceed further; the First is, What is meant by Conversation here? And the reason of the question is, because the word is so very significant in the original, that hardly can we get a word in our language to express it by to the life, 'tis taken from that which signifies a township, corporationship (to speak so) or burgeship: And it implies these Two things: 1st. A title to such and such privileges; as those who were Romans, or born citizens of Rome and whoever were made burgessees of it, had such and such privileges attending their burgeship. The 2d. is a suitableness and peculiar manner of living, and carrying according to the laws of that city; as it is often said in the book of the Acts of the Apostles, "After the manner of the Romans," who had their own laws, customs, and usages: And, being applied here in a spiritual sense, it supposes, 1. A joint interest with the saints, (or being "fellow-citizens with the saints;" as it is, Eph. ii. 19) who are all burgessees of the heavenly Jerusalem: The some of them be, as it were, in the suburbs and lower town; and some in the higher; yet all here below have the same Master and Father with them who are above in heaven. 2. It supposeth a way, walk, and conversation like heaven; to be peculiarly indowed with a nature, inclinations, desires, designs, and qualifications suitable to heaven. We take it here, especially in the latter sense, because Paul proposeth himself as a pattern to them to imitate: and it holds out his suitableness to heaven.

The Second thing to be cleared a little is, What it is to have a conversation in heaven. I Answer, These Two are in effect one and the same, to have a conversation in heaven, and to be heavenly in our conversation: 'Tis even to have a conversation like that which Christians hope to have in heaven, and such as are bounden, and on their way thitherward, should have. This is a general hint of what a heavenly conversation, or a conversation

in heaven, is : and because, in prosecuting the doctrines to be deduced from the words, we will have occasion to explain it more particularly, we shall say no more of it now.

The DOCTRINES that arise from the words are especially these Four : the First whereof is, " That there is a sort of heavenliness in the conversation of Christians, that should be studied by them all without exception, and that lieth on them all as their duty "

The Second is, " That this heavenliness of conversation is in a great measure thro' grace attainable : " For Paul and other believers attained it. Which is not so to be understood, as if there were an universal suitableness, or a suitableness in all things, in sojourning saints, to glorified saints in heaven ; for in heaven they do not eat nor drink neither are they married nor given in marriage : But 'tis to be understood of a suitableness in respect of qualification, conformity and likeness, in so far as is incumbent to sojourners who are walking thitherward.

The Third is, " That it is a peculiar and contradistinguishing mark of a serious, and suitably exercised Christian, from all other men in the world, That his conversation is in heaven, while that of others is not "

The Fourth is, " That 'tis not an ordinary and common, but a rare thing among professed Christians, to have a conversation in heaven. " " Many (says the apostle) walk, of whom I have told you, and now tell you weeping that they are enemies to the cross of Christ : " But I and some few others with me " have our conversation in heaven : " And the many, that he speaks of here, we take to be those, of whom he speaks in the first Chapter, who preached Christ but out of envy, and pressed holiness (it is like) with more than ordinary fervour, being zealous of the law, and seeking to mix the righteousness of it with the righteousness of Christ in the point of justification ; yet they had not their conversation in heaven, as he and some others had.

We shall not prosecute these Doctrines distinctly, seeing this is the scope of them all, even to hold forth and commend the necessity and excellency of a heavenly conversation ; which we shall, 1. Clear : 2. Confirm : and then, 3. We shall speak to the Use of it.

FIRST then, for clearing what a heavenly conversation is, Ye would consider, that the apostle speaks of his own and of some few other godly persons their conversation, in opposition to those many mentioned by him before: And it imports or implies these Four: 1. 'Tis to have heaven proposed to ourselves as our great scope and design, next to the glory of God: Even as, to have an earthly conversation is to mind earth'y things, to have a bentness of spirit towards them, and to be wholly or mostly taken up about the things of the world; so, to be heavenly in our conversation, is to have the mind taken up about heaven, prizing, affecting and seeking after heaven and heavenly things, as the word is, Col. iii. 1. "Seek after, or set your affections on those things that are above." 2. As it imports prizing and affecting of heaven, and of heavenly things; so it imports the taking of that way that leads to the end: And so it is, to be in the use of all means and duties that lead to heaven: "Seek (saith the apostle, in that Col. iii. 1.) those things that are above: Set your affections on things above, not on things beneath, or on the earth: To hold forth the earnestness and ardency of affections that Christians ought to have towards things heavenly, and how very much they should be, with holy care and solicitude, busied in the use of all means, and in the practice of all duties, for the furthering and promoting of an heavenly design: Even as worldly men are taken up and exercised with carking cares, leaving (as it were) no stone unmoved to promote and compass their earthly designs. 3. It imports the having of our conversation like heaven, to be walking like those that are in heaven: Not to be conformed to the world, or like the men of the world but to be like angels and glorified saints in heaven, according to our capacity; as we are taught to pray, in the Lord's Prayer, "Thy will be done on earth, as it is done in heaven." 'Tis to have a native and kindly suitableness and proportionableness to them that are glorified in heaven. 4. It imports this, that we should be often in heaven as to our thoughts and affections, as to our desires and delights: Tho' we be living on the earth, that we should have, as it were, more than our one half in heaven; as David hath it, Psal. xxv. 1. "Unto thee, O Lord, do I lift up my soul;" or, as the word is, 2-Cor. v. Tho' we be "absent in the body," that yet we may be someway

“present in our spirits with the Lord:” that we should make frequent visits to heaven; that we should have much to do there, have much traffique, commerce, correspondence and intercourse in and with heaven; that (in a word) we should converse more where we love, than where we live; which is held forth and exprest in the scripture, by “walking with God,” by “having fellowship with him,” by “following hard after him,” and the like: A suitableness to, and a converse in heaven, are mainly meant here.

As for the Second thing proposed, viz. the Confirmation of this, that a Christian should study this heavenliness of conversation: The argument is clear and pressing from ver. 17. where the apostle exhorts the Philippians to “be followers of him,” and here he tells them that “his conversation is in heaven:” And if his conversation was in heaven, then certainly it was their duty, and is ours, to have our conversation in heaven; for he proposeth himself as our pattern in this, and we have it, from the Spirit of God, by him pressed on us as our duty, to imitate him in this thing. It is not so singular a practice, as to be peuliarized, monopoliz’d and engrossed to him alone; but such as was common to him, and other serious Christians, according to their measure: Therefore he says not, My conversation, but OUR conversation; as if he had said, ’Tis mine, and the conversation of others, and of all that follow me; and I would have you in this to follow me, and none other that doth not walk as I do. If it be needful further to confirm it, ye may take this one reason, which hath several arguments in the bottom of it: A Christian’s conversation should be heavenly, because “all that a Christian hath, is from and in heaven, and is someway heavenly:” As will manifestly appear, if ye look 1. To a Christian’s nature, ’tis from heaven; he is “partaker of the divine nature,” he is “born of God,” he is “of the new Jerusalem;” his Father is heavenly, as he is taught to pray, “Our Father which art in heaven,” or, “Our heavenly Father;” to point out, “that as we have born the image of the earthly, so must we bear the image of the heavenly,” as it is, 1 Cor. xv. 49. Where is the elder Brother? Is he not in “the heavenly places?” as the apostle tells us, Eph. ii. 6. His “treasure is in heaven;” his “hope is in heaven;” Heaven is the City,

the Mansion, the Rest whither he is travelling. Or, if, 2. Ye consider the believer's calling and his obligation: Thereby he is ^a partaker of the heavenly calling; (as it is, Heb. ii. 1.) separated from the rest of the world, and therefore ought not to live as the world doth: He hath a heavenly law to walk by; he hath heavenly promises, to feed and live upon, and to comfort himself in; his happiness is heavenly, and all the duties that he is called to are so; of which this is the substance and sum, even to 'glorify God,' and to seek to 'enjoy him,' and so to shine in his conversation, as others may be provoked to glorify God. Are not his prayers and praises heavenly? and can a believer possibly go aright about those, and not be heavenly? To be 'translated from darkness to light,' to be "a partaker of the sanctifying Spirit of God, to be a new creature," to have 'the Spirit of adoption, to have boldness of access to God,' to be "an heir and a joint heir with Christ," &c. Are not these heavenly? Or, if, 3. We look to his company, is it not heavenly? "We are come (saith the apostle, Heb. xii.) to God the Judge of all, to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, to the new Jerusalem, (which taketh in all the saints in heaven, and the saints on earth) to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly of the first-born, and to the spirits of just men made perfect." In a word, whatever we look to, whether to the believer's nature, or to his end, or to the rule of his walk, or to the promises, or to his work and way wherein he is to go; all is heavenly: Is there not an obliging necessity on the believer, in respect of all these, to study to be heavenly in his conversation? which is the great thing that the apostle Paul presseth on you, and from these words is clearly proved on all Christians.

The Uses are Four; the First whereof serves for Instruction and Information to all that bear the Name of Christ. Know from this, what is the high pitch of holiness that ye are called to; it is even to be heavenly in your conversation. Are there not many who have much need to be instructed in this? who never walked under the conviction of the necessity of this as a duty; otherwise, were it possible that the most part of men and women, who are called Christians, and profess a hope of heaven, could or durst live as they do, some in prophanity, riotousness and gluttony; others in mere civility and moral honesty; and others in formality

and hypocrisy at the best? Let me ask you in good earnest, Are ye not convinced that this is a duty? or, do you think that Paul was scorning or complimenting, when he exhorts to follow him in this? or, is it possible that ye can enjoy so many heavenly privileges, or be to any purpose performing heavenly duties, except ye be heavenly in your conversation? And if so, mistake not Christianity, as if, when ye are exhorted to be Christians, ye were only bidden not to be prophane, or only to go about the external duties of religion, or only to have a sort of merely moral sincerity and seriousness in the performing of them; which are indeed things good in themselves, and we do not, we dare not disallow them, but rather commend them: But ye are called to more, to much more, and that is, to be "heavenly-minded, and to have your conversation in heaven." I know some are so profane, and others are so unbelievably discouraged, that, when they hear such doctrines as this, they will be ready, the one sort to say, 'We cannot all be saints;' and the other, 'Alas! we cannot be saints.' But let all such mouths be stopped; ye are called and obliged indispensably to be saints; and, if ye be not saints here, ye shall never be saints hereafter. There are also some of so distempered dispositions and humours, that they either put off all or most duties, or at least go very heartlessly about them, because they cannot attain perfection in them; but 'tis clear from the scriptures, that there is a kind of perfection to be won at here in this life, which is even this holiness and heavenliness of conversation: When ye shall be called to a reckoning, God will not ask you so much, whether ye did not drink drunk, whore, swear, lie, cheat, steal, or the like; as, whether ye were heavenly in your conversation? And this is not to be ascribed to one, or to some few particular duties; but is the requisite qualification of a Christian in all duties and in all his actions; whether he be praying, practising, hearing, reading, buying, selling, eating, drinking &c. or whatever he do and be about, he is to be heavenly in all those.

And if ye ask more particularly, What that is? I shall shew you, in what respects a Christian may be said to have and should have his conversation in heaven. And, 1st. In respect of the inward holy frame and divine sett of his

heart: He should be heavenly in that; free from those distempering passions, that the men of this world are subjected, nay, enslaved unto, and hurried with: He should not have his affections dragging on the earth, nor his delights nor desires taken up with things earthly; but he should be mortified unto, and weaned from all those things: He should not be like unto those who on all occasions are tossed with their humours, and with every wind of temptation; but he should be so calm, composed and sober, settled and fixed in a heavenly temper of spirit, that words of reproach may not much trouble him, nor crosses and afflictions much disquiet him: He should have such composure and sedateness of spirit, that he may be much above the levity and unstayedness that the men of the world are under the power of: And he should endeavour to be defecate and purged from those impure mixtures of self-interests, that are repugnant in worldly men. 2dly, In respect of his work, he should and may have his conversation in heaven, and that is, when he is much in the exercise of those graces, and in the practice of those duties, that he is to be taken up with in heaven: To be much in love to God, taken up with delighting in him, much in communion with God, holily impatient to want him, or to live without his company: To be much in the study and searching out of his perfections; to be studying to have the heart fixed, as it were a pillar in his house, and not to go out from him: To be much in admiring and adoring the free grace and love of God; and to be in a holy manner ravished with the contemplation of those: To be much in the work of prayer, and much in the work of praise, saying, "Worthy is the Lamb to receive glory, honour, dominion," &c. joining with "the four beasts, and four and twenty elders, saying, Holy, holy, Lord God Almighty:" To be much in prizing and valuing of God, in setting out and commending him; to be in all duties willing and cheerful, doing God's will cheerfully and with alacrity: To be much in longing for the sabbath to converse more closely with him; longing often for privacy and retirement to pour out the heart before him: And to do all this with holy coveting to do it better, praying "that his will may be done on earth, as it is done in heaven." 3dly, A believer may be said to have his conversation, and

you are called to have yours in heaven, in respect of a heavenly walk, and as having a heavenly impress on all your conversation; to be walking as it were in heaven, and as if 'Holiness to the Lord,' were written on your 'foreheads:' Which, being very comprehensive, takes in these: 1. To have the heart fixed in meditating on God and his law, on spiritual and heavenly things; to have a sublime and divine strain of mind, not debasing itself to pursue vanities, but kept in a close and constant pursuit after communion with God, and conformity to him: To be in case to say with David, Psal. cxxxix. "When I awake, I am still with thee;" labouring to leave the heart and mind in heaven when ye ly down, and seeking to find it there when ye arise. 2. To have your affections, love, desires and delights in heaven, or heavenly. 3. To have your words favouring of heaven, "ministring grace to the hearers;" endeavouring to have your words weighty and grave in the commendation of God and his grace. 4. To have your hearing of the word, and your praying, carrying much of a heavenly stamp and impress on them; hearing, as if God were speaking to you immediately from heaven; and praying, as if ye were even before his throne. 5. In your more common and ordinary conversation, as in your eating and drinking, in your recreating, and in following your lawful callings and employments, even the very coarsest and lowest of them, to propose to yourselves another end than the men of the world do, making that your main end to glorify God; and to have such a heavenly and divine way of going about these, as may be convincing, edifying and gaining of on-lookers: Not to be predominantly influenced by selfish humours, designs or interests, looking only, or mainly, to what may please or profit yourselves; but levelling all at the glory of God, and the edification and good of others, as well as your own. 4thly, We may be said to have our conversation in heaven, when we have a holy commerce and trading (as it were) with heaven: As a man is said to converse in France or Spain, when he trades and traffiques there; so, to have converse in heaven, is spiritually to traffique there: To have faith and hope exercised in and about heaven: To send many prayers and desires to heaven, as so many empty vessels; and to

be in the lively and longing expectation of their return full and richly laden: To make many visits (as I said before) to heaven; and to be in all those, neither seldom, nor transiently and at starts only, but to be frequent and more continuing in them: And tho' they should sometimes return either with seeming loss, or with very little gain, yet to keep up the trade and traffique, seeking to make up our loss by a new voyage thither; for the trade is not always (to speak so) alike quick. 5thly, We may be said to converse in heaven, by our abiding (as it were) in heaven; and this is one of the highest steps of a heavenly conversation. If ye shall ask, How it is, that a believer, while on earth, doth or can abide in heaven? I answer, These ways, or in these respects: 1. By having his heart in heaven, where his treasure is: "For (as the Lord says) where a man's treasure is, there is his heart." The man (as it were) dwells there, and, if at any time he remove a little, he leaves there his great stock, and his heart as a factor: So, tho' the Christian be discoursing, buying, selling, eating, drinking, &c. yet, in all these, his heart may and ought some way to be in heaven. To have his faith in heaven, and, as it were, never to come out of it: 3. To have his love in heaven, folding its two arms about the Lamb, and him that sits on the throne; holily loth to have them loosed from those sweet soul-solacing and satisfying embraces. 4. To have his hope in heaven, which is "an anchor cast within the vail," and makes the soul safe and sure amidst the greatest tempests of outward trouble, as a ship rideth safely when she hath cast anchor on firm ground, so that there is no fear she will drive. In a word, these Four, the Heart, Faith, Hope, and Love, being in heaven, we may say that the man's best half and part is in heaven; his tedder-stake is loosed, and much of his tabernacle taken down, and he made in a good measure meet, ready and ripe for his dissolution, and for heaven: Thus ye are called and obliged to have your conversation in heaven. 6thly, A believer's conversation may be said to be, and ought to be in heaven, when his contentment, delight and satisfaction are in heaven; when all that he desires, all that he delights in, and on which his soul feeds, and all that he is comforted with, is in heaven, and he hath not a day to do well, nor one comfortable good hour, but that which is given him from heaven: And

this is not only to be abiding with, but to be delighting in God; having 'the peace of God, that passeth understanding, guarding the heart, and his love shed abroad therein;' and having all that which entertains his life coming from heaven. Thus, Col. iii. 3. it is said, that "our life is hid with Christ in God:" So that the believer is affected with nothing, feeds upon, and is satisfied with nothing so much as he is with that which comes from heaven; he awakes, he sleeps, he rests there: This is to live in heaven, and to be heavenly in our conversation; and this is it that ye are called and obliged to, even to have your conversation in heaven, in all these forementioned respects; that as ye believers are of another nature, so ye may be of another and more divine frame of soul in your work and walk, in your thoughts and words, in your outward duties, and in the exercise of inward graces, in your commerce and trading, in your contentment, delight and satisfaction, to be heavenly in all.

And if any shall here say, This is a very hard task: I answer, 1. Can it be hard to be in heaven? Nay, 'tis an ease rather, for Christ's "y^e is easy, and his burden is light:" and inasmuch as our conversation is in heaven, we have so much true spiritual ease and repose of soul: And it is what we leave behind in the world, that makes the difficulty to get our spirits screwed up to heaven, and to be kept there; here lies the difficulty: But, the more the heart and the mind be there, we have really the more ease. 2. Will ye shift, deny or decline the duty, because 'tis difficult and hard? as indeed it is to corrupt nature: Notwithstanding all the difficulty of it, the apostle Paul with his fellows and followers did win to it in a good measure, and we may attain it thro' grace, according to our measure. Is not this the way to heaven, which our Lord calleth Strait, and which but 'few find?' and yet, if ye would try and make proof of it in good earnest, ye would find it to be not so very strait or unpassable as ye imagine it to be. It would be found to be waited with such delight, as would much sweeten any hardness in it; and ye would not want an insight in those heavenly mysteries, and the beholding your names written in heaven, and in the Lamb's book of life, nor one hour's feeding upon and being solaced by them, for all the delights of the men of this world: And,

since 'tis only hard to corruption, it should be so much the more endeavoured and plyed hard.

The Second Use serves for Trial, that we may know who is a Christian indeed, and a thriving Christian: Or it may serve rather to be an use of discovery and of conviction; and indeed it may very easily and quickly make discovery of the unsoundness of many, and of the short-coming of all. Need we insist on this? Is it not a truth obvious to all, viz. That Christians are called and obliged to be so heavenly in their conversation? Are not these the characters of such a conversation? Nay, is there not yet much more requisite in a Christian, even a divineness above what we can express? And if ye be (as ye may be) convinced that this is a truth; then let me in the next place ask you, If your conversation be such? Put your own consciences to it; enquire at them, whether your trade be to heaven, whether your peace and joy, your delight and satisfaction be there? Would God ye would essay it, and could upon good ground say, that it is so: But ah! is there any that can say it without some hesitation? Is not the best exceeding defective? Or, if any of you shall say, it is so; what then means your carnalness, your prevailing lusts, distemp'ring humours and passions? What means your so much pleading for self-interests, thus turning (as it were) of the world up-side down for our own particulars? How comes it to pass, that ye who are profane do spend so much of your precious time in tippling and trifle away so much of it unprofitably many other ways? Dare ye say, that ye who walk thus, are indeed followers of the apostle Paul? Or, if ye dare not say, that ye are followers of him in his heavenly conversation; can ye think or expect to dwell with him in heaven? O "be not deceived, for God will not be mocked:" When ye reflect seriously on yourselves and on your way, will ye not find just ground for being ashamed and confounded before God? Or, is there any of us all, that needs to want an errand to the throne of grace, to confess and crave pardon for our sinful short-coming in this? I shall only speak a word or two, in further prosecution of this Use, to you that are stout-hearted, and know no changes, that have always a good opinion and a good word to say of yourselves; who are ready to say, that ye have a good meaning, and to think

and say that ye loved God all your days; and who at best content yourselves with, and sit down on a form of religion; who never studied to die to the world, and never made it your business in good earnest, to mortify your lusts, and to be holy in the inward frame of your souls: Is this, think ye, to have 'your conversation in heaven?' Would ye know, then, if ever ye have studied Christianity seriously? try it by this, viz. whether ye have been heavenly in your conversation; for, however ye judge of yourselves, God will most certainly judge you according to this rule and qualification of a Christian: It is both sad and strange to think, how it comes to pass, that many of you bear and bolster up yourselves with a hope of heaven, and profess that ye have no doubt but you shall come thither, who yet want and are void of this qualification.

I know such will be ready to object, Who are they that come this length? To which I shall only answer, That as I would be very loth to "quench any smoking flax, or to break any bruised reed," (whereof our Lord and Master is very tender) or to cast water of discouragement upon any the least spark or spunk of sincerity, where there is any honest aiming to walk according to this rule; so, I cannot, I dare not but say to others, in the first place, Have ye walked under the conviction of this as a duty incumbent on you? and have ye seriously proposed it to yourselves as your great business in the world, to be sincerely aiming at, and endeavouring after this conversation in heaven? Or, have ye not rather had peace (such as it was) when ye said your prayers, morning and evening, tho' ye did not so much as design or aim at this throughout the day? And can ye with any shadow of reason think, ye have attained it, or can attain it, who never seriously proposed this as a rule to yourselves to walk by, nor never had a conscience-disquieting challenge for such neglect and manifest shortcoming? 2. What labour are ye at, what pains take ye to prosecute such a design and blessed project as this? It is one thing to pray, to be about external duties of religion, and to be a Christian in the letter; and another thing to be in these duties after a heavenly manner, and to be a Christian indeed, a Christian inwardly, and in the spirit, whose praise 'is not of men, but of God.' Is it really your honest aim,

design and endeavour (whatever be the attainment) to be as much heavenly in your conversation, as it is to be civil and formal, or to attend the outward ordinances? I fear many of you cannot say, it is. 3. What weight lies on your spirits, for your short-coming in this? Ye will (belike) say, We are all short; which is a sad truth, for indeed so we are: But, are ye really weighted and grieved for your short-coming in this? Have there been any times taken, to deal purposely with the Lord to remove the earthly mind, and to help to heavenly-mindedness? Have there been challenges and any measure of serious heart-exercise, because of the want of a heavenly mind? and that not only sometimes at the hearing of a sermon, or in time of sickness, or when under some other trouble; but in your more constant and habitual walk? Is it one of the great things for which ye blame and find fault with yourselves before God? And tho' your outside and visible conversation be blameless; yet while you look on the carnalness and earthliness of your mind, and on the want of this divine and heavenly frame of soul, it makes you hang the head, mars your boldness, and (as it were) lays your feathers; because, do what ye can, your heart will not abide in heaven? If it be thus, it is a token for good, and some ground of peace; but O how rare is this? Many of you, belike, have often overly prayed, "Forgive us our sins:" who never took with, nor prayed for the pardon of this sin; but have lyen down at night, and risen up in the morning, having your hearts plunged and puddled in the world, without once minding heaven in earnest, and yet have never been challenged for it: O sad state!

The Third Use serves to reprove and expostulate for this unworthy carriage; for having either nothing at all, or but very little of a conversation in heaven: We take it for granted, that many of us are far from it, and that all of us are little in it, but very few even of the best are daily and constantly conversing in heaven; alas! 'tis but now and then, with many sad interruptions. For quickning this reproof and expostulation a little, let me propose these few Queries to you; and, in the First place, Do ye not know that the neglect of this is a sin, and the breach of a command, "Be ye followers of me?" 2. Is not this an excellent duty and royal privilege, to be admitted to con-

verse in heaven? and therefore the neglect of it must not only be a sin, but a great sin, even a trampling on the grace of God, a slighting of heaven, and of a most noble privilege and dignity. 3. Think ye heaven to be of great worth? if so, must not conversing in heaven be of much worth? will ye never so much as once go to see the house, wherein ye say ye are to dwell? O how unsuitable a thing is it, that those who are but days-men here, should sit down and settle on the earth, without minding heaven; and be so confined within time, as not seriously to mind eternity! 4. How can ye come before God with confidence and boldness, who do not endeavour thus to walk with him? Can ye say with holy boldness, "Our Father which art in heaven," whose conversation is not heavenly? Can ye pray for holiness, and say these words, "Thy will be done on earth, as it is done in heaven," who never studied to be heavenly in any duty that ye put hand to? But, 5. and above all, I would ask you, Can ye hope to die comfortably, nay, can ye hope to die in safety as to your souls, who know not heaven, nor what is there, nor what is the way to it? It gives a man confidence and comfort at death, that he hath conversed in heaven in his lifetime: Such a man hath but little to do, when he comes to die; he knows the way, and is not afraid; he knows the company, and longs to be with them; he knows the privileges, and longs for the full enjoyment of them: He hath little here, his treasure is above in heaven, and his heart, faith, love, and hope are there; his anchor is cast within the vail, and he would fain be ashore: Sure, this is the believer's both duty and privilege. Do not think, that it is only called for from some more than ordinary Christians, and who have nothing else to do: The matter is not so; it is most certainly a duty, to which ye are all called that have a mind to land fairly in heaven, when ye come off the troublesome, tossing and tempestuous sea of this world.

Now therefore, in the Last room (as the Fourth Use of the Doctrine) I exhort, beseech and obtest, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, all of you that lay any claim to the hope of heaven, that ye would, and more than ever, study to have your conversation in heaven: O be followers of Paul and of his fellows in this thing: Need we adduce any motives to press this? Is not the duty clear? And is

it not a most excellent duty, a most desirable qualification of a Christian walk? Is not heaven transcendently excellent? And is it not excellent to be heavenly-minded, and conversant in heaven? Wherein may we expect to prevail with you, if not in bringing you to heaven? What is the thing that should sweeten the study of holiness to you? Is it not this, even that, by having your conversation in heaven, ye come thither? Those who are now in heaven, think it a great motive: and, if it be not a motive to you, ye will one day curse yourselves that ye neglected it: Study it therefore in due time; this is the way to be free of the incumbrances of an evil world: There is no hazard of this estate its being forfeited or sequestered, there are no plundrings nor quarterings here, no poverty nor pain, nor any sad evil occurrent here. O what a desirable life is it to be above all those things! And indeed, in so far as your conversation is heavenly, in so far ye are above them, and live the life of angels.

It is like ye will ask, What are the means or steps by which we may win in and ascend to this heavenliness of conversation? which is indeed a very suitable question, and would God we were serious in proposing of it, and were convinced of the necessity of it: However, let such as would fain be at it, know, 1. That they must be much mortified and denied to creature-comforts; therefore, Col. iii. these two are opposed, "Seek those things which are above, set your affections on things in heaven, and not on things of the earth." To go both up and down at once, is impossible: If ye would be heavenly in your conversation, seek to have the world little and low in your estimation; to be not only free from the sinful intanglements of it, but to be mortified to things lawful. I press you not to negligence in your honest and lawful callings, far less to lay them aside, but to a heavenly-mindedness and holy deniedness in your diligence: "Use the things of this world, as not abusing them," as not being taken with them, nor glued to them. The minding of earthly things too much, clogs and keeps mens hearts, that they do not mount up to heaven: It is impossible, while the heart is forfeited with the cares of this life, that it can thus soar aloft. And therefore, 2. Those that would be heavenly in their conversation, must lay up their treasure in heaven; "for, where

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the treasure is, there will the heart be also." Were ye under the deep and due conviction of the vanity of earthly things, and of the excellency of heaven and heavenly things, and laying your reckoning soberly and seriously, that heaven ye must have, it would be much more easy to screw up your affections to it: As, where men's stock and treasure is, there is their heart; even so, were your great stock and treasure in heaven, your heart would certainly be there; your hope, your love and delight would be there: But your seeking after contentment and satisfaction in earthly vanities, where it cannot be found, keeps your heart out of heaven. 3. Be much in the duty of meditation and contemplation of heavenly things: This is (as it were) the great wheel and first mover of the clock, to have the mind heavenly, often conversing in heaven, and often thinking of it, and often recounting the blessed advantages, the glorious and great happiness that are there, even till "your meditation of God be made sweet," and till your delight in him, thereby stirred up and strengthened, make a heavenly conversation: For little such meditation makes little heavenly-mindedness; and, when the mind is not on heaven, something that is worse comes in the place of it. Ye that know the bent and inclination of your own minds to be naturally downward, and how natively (to speak so) it runs on vanities; and how difficult it is to keep it, but amongst two or three sentences, fixed on heavenly things; and how preternatural a motion it is (as it were) to make it ascend and mount upward, will easily assent to the truth of this. It is an excellent word that David hath, Psal. 139. "When I awake I am still with thee." 4. We commend this to you (hinted at before) that ye would be much in trading and traffiquing with heaven; to be often and serious in prayer, frequently sending up desires thither, and bringing thence returns of prayer in great measures of grace; catching hold of, and gripping at somewhat above you, whereby ye may be helped up that high and holy hill: It "transforms into the same image from glory to glory," to be keeping love to Christ fresh, to have hope as an anchor cast within the vail. In a word, love to Christ, and delight in him, being, as a considerable part, so also the result of holiness; there must be a study of holiness in all the parts

of it, of holiness in all manner of conversation, and a heavenly frame aimed at, and endeavoured in all duties, and in all the steps of our walk and conversation, in order to the keeping in, cherishing and increasing of love to, and delight in him; and often thinking on that which helps to it, viz. "Let thy will be done on earth, as it is done in heaven:" a word often in the mouths of many, but little in their hearts. And O how lamentably unlike are the practices of many of you to it! We may indeed blush and think shame to speak, and you may think shame to hear of having a conversation in heaven, there being so little of it amongst us: But we must speak of it, and ye must hear it spoken of; since it is a part, and a great part of our duty; and will be a part, and a great part of our reckoning: And we lay and leave it upon you from the Lord, to be studied by you. Do not think that ye shall ever have your conversation in heaven afterward, who have not your conversation in heaven here: Many of you that have a fair profession of religion, and seem to come near to that harbour of rest, and yet never enter into it, are like to a ship that comes, as it were, with up-sails, very near the port, and is unexpectedly blown back to the sea again; whereas the believer, who has his anchor cast on firm and sure ground within the veil, is enabled to endure tossing, being like a tight ship, that is able to ride out the storm, and to stem the port: His treasure is in heaven, and there is a sure and indissoluble knot cast betwixt heaven, where his treasure is, and his heart. Now, from all this judge, what a mighty prejudice it is to be earthly-minded, and to slight this walk with God, and conversation in heaven: And who are they that dare offer or presume to come before God the righteous Judge of heaven and earth, in whose sight the very heavens are not pure, to abide his trial, who have been puddling all their days in the world, never once seriously and suitably minding a conversation in heaven? O let the consideration of eternal happiness on the one hand, and of eternal misery on the other, provoke you, and necessitate you all to study in good earnest "to have your conversation in heaven." And ye believers in Christ, and children of light, walk in the light, suitably to your heavenly Father, and to the hope of your heavenly inheritance: O be more conversant in heaven, before ye come to it, and where ye shall be by and by for evermore.

S E R M O N VI.

A Preparation-SERMON for the COMMUNION.

On ISAIAH lv. 1, 2, 3.

—I will make an everlasting Covenant with you, even the sure Mercies of David.

IT is hard to conceive or express, whether the things which the gospel offereth be the most large, or the terms on which they are offered be the most free. There is that, no doubt; in both together, which may make the beholder stay and wonder. Among many excellent offers of the gospel, that which is here, is one very full and free: Would to God we could look on it suitably. But, alas! we may fear, that we shall rather leave the sweet words with a veil cast over the beauty, splendor and lustre of them, than lay them forth and unfold them as we ought, and as they call for; we would therefore look to himself whose words they are, and beseech him to explain and make them out to us.

That this text speaks of the gospel, of the times of the gospel, and of gospel-mercies, we take for granted, and have good reason to do so, as on other accounts, so from Acts xiii. 34 which clearly holds out to us, that these promises are not to be understood of temporal things: The 5th Verse withal telling us, that the offer of this grace promised, shall be made to the Nations.

We may take up the words in these Four; or, there is here a gospel cried fair or market, set out in Four things: 1. In the wares, 'Wine and Milk, that which satisfies, and is good, and Fatness,' vers. 2. Soul, Life, and "the sure Mercies of David," ver. 3. These are the wares, which do all come to the same amount. If ye would know what

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That is, ye may consider David two ways, one is properly and personally, as he is the son of Jesse, and king of Israel: it is the covenant which was made with him, a main article whereof was, 'That out of his loins there should One spring, who should sit upon his throne for ever:' and thus the sure Mercies of David, are CHRIST and his Benefits. The other way that ye would look on David is, as he was a Type of CHRIST, the Antitype and principal Covenanter or confederating Party with GOD; and so in effect it turns to the same thing, only this latter way is more clear. So then, we look on David here, as it is not unusual for the Scriptures to hold him forth, viz. as a Type of JESUS CHRIST; and indeed the words following do abundantly clear it: For David, personally considered, was now long since dead and gone, and was not the Witness nor the Leader of the people; therefore it must needs be JESUS CHRIST that here is meant, mainly and principally at least; as is very clear, Acts xiii. 34. CHRIST then being looked on as here understood, "The sure Mercies of David," are the sure Mercies covenanted and bargained (to speak so) to CHRIST before the world was; and it plainly implies, that there was a covenant or bargain betwixt the FATHER and the SON about the Elect before the beginning of the world, whereof, as to the benefits therein covenanted to the Mediator, the gospel maketh an assignation to believers in time. 2. We have the chapman, (to say so) or the merchant to whom the Wares are offered; it is he that Thirsts, he that wants, and would have: And if any serious poor souls should think, that they are not suitably sensible of their wants; then, saith the Lord, "Let him that hath no money come:" That is, plain dyvours (as we speak) or bankrupts that have nothing. 3. We have the terms on which all are offered to sale, and they indeed suit wondrously well with the merchant: "Come, (saith the Lord) buy without money and without price; hear, and your soul shall live, and I will make an everlasting covenant with you." There is (to speak so with reverence) not a purse opened in, nor a penny paid for the assignation of this bargain; tho' by Christ's satisfaction there was a very great, a very costly and dear price paid: When Christ came to buy and make a purchase of all these mercies for the elect, the market was very high, and the prices were up; but, when believers

come by the covenant of grace to receive them, the market is come down, and the prices are fallen wonderfully low; that which stood him very dear, is to be had by them gratis, very freely, even for nothing: 'Tis good that Christ was at the market before us, he hath cheapned the prices admirably. And, lest any should think, that tho' there be no merit, yet something must be to mollify the Seller, and to commend the merchant to him; it is said, 'Let him come without money and without price:' without money or money-worth; he that hath no commending qualification, is bid come. 4. We have the proclamation of this market: As grace hath choice wares, and sets them out very freely to sale, so it keeps them not close shut up, but brings them forth to publick view, and to every one, "Ho, come to the waters:" It inviteth all to come (as it were) to the shore, as if some fleet were come in with rare and rich commodities, for which men were to pay nothing; the proclamation is, "Come, and buy without money." And, because grace will not easily take a nay say, there is *OHO*, an *OYES* prefixed; "Ho, come and buy." But, because there is dulness and slowness on our part, notwithstanding all this, there is an expostulation added, ver. 2. "Wherefore spend ye your money for that which is not bread, and your labour for that which satisfieth not?" The assignation of the bargain, and the offer of the Wares, are again urged: "Come, and I will make an everlasting Covenant with you." And, to let us know that this is sure, he subjoins, ver. 4. "I have given him for a Witness and Leader to the people;" that all who are sensible of their own inability to come, may be heartned to it, in hope of his help to enable them:

We shall only, in short, observe these Two Points of Doctrine from the words; The First whereof is, "That there is a most gracious and merciful transaction betwixt the Father and the Son, for the good and salvation of poor souls, even of all the elect, past before the world was." There are sure Mercies bargained to David; for they are first his: This is clear from that part of the words, "Even the sure Mercies of David." The Second is, "That all those Mercies are put to sale in the Gospel to (dyvour) bankrupt sinners, upon exceeding easy, low and condescending terms."

The First Doctrine is implied, viz. "That the covenant of redemption, wherem there were so many given to Christ, whose price he undertook to pay, is settled and established;" according to that, John vi. 39 "This is the Father's will, that of all he hath given me, I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day." The Second looks to the administration of this covenant, by the covenant of grace in the gospel; according to ver. 40. "And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one that seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life, and I will raise him up at the last day." So that, what is laid on the Son, ver. 39. as the condition of this covenant, is in the 40 verse, made offer of to believers by the gospel.

The first doctrine hath two branches: The first whereof is, "That there was a transaction concerning the salvation of lost sinners, betwixt the Father and the Son, before the world was:" A covenant made with David, before it is or can be declared and preached in the gospel; the terms whereof were resolved on, and all the articles of it agreed upon; the Father proposing, and the Son accepting the bargain from eternity: As is clear, Psal. xl. 6, 7. where, when it is, as it were, consulted what shall be the price of redemption, it is not 'sacrifices nor burnt-offerings,' but, "A Body hast thou prepared me: Behold, I come, in the volume of thy book it is written of me, I delight to do thy will, O my God:" Which is expressly applied to Christ, Heb. x. 7. This is easily cleared from the consideration of the Parties contracting, and of the ends for which this covenant was undertaken, and of the effects that follow upon it.

The second branch of the doctrine is, "That this as to sinners is a most gracious and merciful, a most kind, loving and lovely transaction, exceedingly for the behoof and advantage of sinners." There are Four words in the text, which hold out this: 1. The nature of this covenant is Mercy, all the articles of it savour strongly of mercy to sinners; they are exempted, tho' Christ came under sore strokes: Whether we consider this covenant as exacting of Christ, or promising to Christ, it is always for sinners behoof. It is a covenant of Mercies, of many various mercies: So, 2 Sam. xxiii. 5. it is said to be "an everlasting Covenant, ordered in all things, and sure." And

2 Pet. i. 4. it is said, "According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain to life and godliness:" Mercies of justification, pardon of sin, sanctification in all its gradual advances, of fellowship with God, of grace and glory, even of every good thing, or good things of all sorts. 3. It is very gracious and merciful in respect of the excellent kind of these mercies; they are not common mercies, but "the Mercies of David," bestowed upon his Anointed: Christ is furnished and filled with them, that "out of his fulness we may receive, and grace for grace;" even grace in a good measure. 4. They are stable Mercies, not fleeting and quickly gone, not a glance of mercy which vanisheth; the covenant is everlasting, and the mercies are "the sure Mercies of David."

If we might particularly go through all the parts of this covenant, mercy will be found sweetly looking out in every article, clause and circumstance of it. Look, 1st. More generally, to the whole of it; 'tis all loving-kindnesses and mercies to sinners: Look to Christ's sufferings and death, O what mercy shines conspicuously there! To his qualifications for the discharge of all his offices; to his anointing with the Spirit without measure, there is great mercy there; to all the promises made to him, such as these, "He shall see his seed; the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand; by his knowledge shall he justify many; he shall have a willing people," eternally to reign with him, &c. Are not these loud-speaking mercies? The grace and wisdom that is on the Father's side, and the grace and love that is on the Son's side, are all for the behoof and good of sinners; 'tis all wonderfully behoofful: Is it not great mercy to you believers, that you were minded in this bargain? The Lord Christ, as God, neither needed nor was capable of any accession of grace; he took the relation of our Redeemer and Mediator, and as such, in the human nature, was filled with grace and bowels of mercy and compassion, that grace and mercy might look through that relation to us. 2dly, And more particularly, look to the rise of it: It bred in God's own bosom, (to speak so) John iii. 16. "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever should believe on him, might not perish, but have everlasting life." And the Son laid down his life out of pure love; there was no

necessity on him to do so, but what he voluntarily came under; there was no motive from us to it, nor had he any adviser to it. 3dly, Look to the manner of his undertaking: It was very readily, cheerfully, and with ardent, vehemently ardent love; so that we may say of it, as of that chariot mentioned, Cant. iii. 10. "It is made of, and paved with love, for the daughters of Jerusalem." The elect being under the curse, Christ out of mere love undertakes to satisfy justice for them: Sacrifices will not do it, rivers of oil will not do it, the first-born of the body will not do it, nor satisfy for the sin of the soul; what will do it then? Grace suggests, that the Son shall become man, and do it; and the Son saith, "Lo, I come:" O what love and mercy are here! 4thly, Look to the contrivance of it, and there you will find much grace and mercy; that it is made with a Mediator, and with a Mediator that is a Surety; that the stock is bestowed on him, and put under his custody; that the promises are made to him, and the price exacted from himself. 5thly, Look to the manner of executing it: What love, grace and mercy shines forth in the Father, in taking vengeance on his only begotten Son for us? What love in the Son, in yielding to take it on, and in his leaving his manifestative glory for a time, that he might undergo the curse, and in his doing all this with delight? 6thly, Look to the confirmation of this covenant: The oath of God on the Father's side, the death of the Mediator on the Son's side; and he hath freely bequeathed it as a confirmed testament and legacy to us believers, and hath instituted sacraments, to be seals thereof. O what mercy upon mercy! 7thly, Consider the effects of it: It runs in the sweet streams of grace, into the vast gulf and ocean of glory; wonderful mercy! 8thly, Look to the Parties confederating and covenanting: The Father, Son, and Spirit, all are here; and 'tis grace and mercy that they covenant. 2. Who are the Contrivers of it? Are not even they in their deep wisdom, and in their exuberant, superabundant and infinite grace and mercy? 3. What is the end of it? Even "the praise of the glory of his grace," Eph. i. 5. Grace bringing forth and manifestly shewing here its great master-piece. 4. As infinite wisdom and love contrive, so infinite power executes it: And when all these concur in this bargain, when the infinitely wise God,

all the Persons of the most glorious, dreadful and adorable Trinity (as it were) set themselves to set forth the glory of free grace, to make angels and saints behold and admire in it infinite wisdom and incomprehensible love; what a rare piece must it needs be! And this is the end of it, as is clear, Eph. iii. 9, 10. "That all men might see what is the fellowship of this mystery, which from the beginning of the world had been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ: To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in the heavenly places, might be known by the Church the manifold wisdom of God."

The second doctrine is, "That this good and gracious bargain, that is past betwixt the Father and the Son, which is wholly mercy, is brought to the market, and exposed to sale, on exceeding easy and condescending terms, and that to bankrupt sinners." What proclaims the Lord here? even this, "I will give you the sure Mercies of David: That which I and my Son have carved out for the glory of grace; and for a proof of the riches of my bounty, I will make all over to you freely." Hence, Eph. iii. 8. it is called, "The unsearchable riches of Christ:" so that, whatever Christ hath as Mediator, it is holden forth here, "that out of his fulness we may receive grace for grace:" a proportion of all the grace that is in him.

In prosecuting this point, we shall shew, 1. More particularly, what this bargain is, that is put to the sale. 2. Who the merchant is. 3. What are the terms on which, and how it is made. 4. What is the manner how the gospel puts home this bargain, and lays Christ and his fulness forth upon stands in the market-place, as it were, (to speak thus with reverence of this divine mystery) that there may be free access to whosoever will come and buy these rare and rich wares and commodities.

As for the First, That ye may know what the bargain is, and what is in your offer in this day of the gospel, take it in these few particulars: 1. All that ever any believer in the world had, is put to sale here: If any believer ever had fair privileges, sure it was David; if ever any had a merciful bargain, he had it. And such is this covenant; justification, adoption, peace with God, grace and glory; all these marrowy, material, massy and essential blessings that David had: It was not another Christ,

nor another heaven, nor another covenant of grace that he had, but the same that is here. 2. Consider it further, and we will find it to be all that is made over to our Lord Jesus Christ: If he had a good bargain, the Spirit without measure, fulness of truth and grace, great glory and honour, being advanced to the right hand of the Father, the same is believers their bargain proportionally, a due and just proportion being kept betwixt the Head and the members, John i. 16. "Of his fulness have we all received, and grace for grace:" It is not another, but the same grace that our Lord Jesus hath; yea, it is not another glory they are advanced to, no other table they are set down to, no other throne they are set on; but the same glory, table, and throne: It is to 'behold his glory,' to 'sit at his table,' to 'sit with him on his throne,' John xvii. 22, 24. Luke xxii. 30. Rev. iii. 21. In a word, there are not two covenants of redemption betwixt Jehovah and the Mediator, one for himself, and another for the elect; but it is one and the same covenant for both, tho' with many vastly different respective considerations and circumstances. 3. Look to the wares and commodities (to speak so) that are exposed to sale in the gospel: They are not only the promises made to Christ, but Jesus Christ himself is brought forth to the market; he is the great Promise, and far beyond all the other promises made in, and the graces given by the covenant; "I have given him (saith the Lord, ver. 4.) for a Witness and Leader to the people." He is the great Gift of God, that Gift of gifts, being the Father's Fellow: Nothing in heaven or earth, no person, man or angel, can by far, very far, infinitely far, equal him: To whom can you liken or compare him? "To us (saith the prophet Isaiah, Chap. ix.) a Child is born, to us a Son is given, and the government shall be upon his shoulders; and his Name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace." This is David's most substantial massy Mercy. He is called WONDERFUL, because there is no possibility for creatures adequately to conceive, or with exact suitableness to express what his Name is, or what is comprehended within his Name. 4. Look on Christ as Mediator, as God-Man, IMMANUEL, "God with us:" There is put to the market, (to speak so with reverence)

God himself; for thus the covenant is expounded and sum'd, as frequently elsewhere in the scripture, so particularly, 2 Cor. vi. 16. "I will be their God:" And Rev. xxi. 17. "He that overcometh shall inherit all things, and I will be his God." Now, consider all these in a conjunction, viz. What all believers have; what Christ hath, and Christ himself; what God hath, and God himself: O what an incomprehensibly rich and rare, great and glorious bargain is this! And yet all is by the gospel brought forth, laid before the hearers of it, and made offer of to them, on most easy and wonderfully condescending terms. May we briefly and in a few words sum up what is in it? (1.) All things that may make up believers their peace with God, and remove the quarrel. (2.) All things pertaining to, or needful for life and godliness; as it is, 2 Pet. i. 4. (3.) All things that belong to the comfort and consolation of believers, even strong consolation, as it is called, Heb. vi. 18. There is no want so great, but there is a supply for it here; no case so sad, but there is a comfort for it here; there is not any thing that looks like a crack or uncertainty, but there is sufficient security for it here, in this covenant, (in this most full and wonderfully "well-ordered Covenant in all things, and very sure") to all who are fled to Christ for refuge. (4.) There is in it what is needful and requisite to full satisfaction, to the solace, delight, joy and compleat happiness of the persons that cordially close with it: So that a soul can crave no more, nor wish for more; it is even 'all their desire,' as David saith of it, 2 Sam. xxiii. 5. 'Tis *MENSURA VOTI*, nay, *ULTRA MENSURAM VOTI*; it never entred into man's heart to conceive, much less to desire it. It makes the soul say, as it is, Psal. lxxiii. 25. "Whom have I in heaven but thee? there is none on earth whom I desire besides thee." It hath 'all things' in it; as it is, Rev. xxi. 7. "He that overcometh, shall inherit all things." For if God and Christ, grace and mercy be in it, is there any thing amissing? or can there possibly be any thing wanting in it? May I not very confidently ask you, Is it not a good bargain? If the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, grace, heaven and glory, be a good bargain; this is then most certainly a good bargain, a wonderfully good, matchless, and non-such bargain: And is not this gospel, whereby all these great

things are brought to the market, good news? Take heed then that ye receive not this grace in vain, that these wares, worthy of all possible intertainment and welcome, stand not before you un-bought: I say again, take heed that ye receive not all this grace in vain, that these precious and costly wares go not from the market un-bought up.

SECONDLY, Who are the chapmen or merchants? You would have readily thought that such wares would have required mighty monarchs, great statemen, learned philosophers, or holy kings, prophets, apostles and great men; and yet the proclamation is, (for grace cometh ordinarily in the lower way) "Ho, every one that thirsts, and he that hath no money." These are the merchants who are meet for this rich ware. Are there any that want what may make them happy, and would fain have? are there any that have their peace to make with God? any that have not their interest clear and made sure? any that are wrestling with a body of death, and groaning under it? any that fain would have sin pardoned and subdued? any that would have grace, heaven and glory, and have nothing to give for all these or any of them, and who have spent many years labour in vain and to no purpose, to come by them? 'Tis to you, even to you, that all these rich wares and rare commodities are in a special manner offered in this cried fair of grace. And, to clear this a little, I suppose there are none of you but you are some way under-one of these Three, tho' the external call and offer comes indifferently to you all: Ye are either, 1. Senseless and secure; and to you the gospel says, "How long, ye fools, will ye love simplicity?" and, "How long will ye sleep, O sluggards?" As there is a challenge and regret here, so there is a conditional offer made to you, in as far as it is here implied, that the offer is made to them "who have no bread," and have been "bestowing their labour on that which satisfies not;" glutting themselves with the world, or wrapping themselves up in the groundless conceit of their own righteousness: To such it saith, "How long will ye spend your labour for that which is not bread?" Or, 2. Ye are some way affected with sin, lying under convictions, stung some way burnt up, and consumed with the apprehensions of the wrath and terrors of God: The word which this offer hath to such, is the very first in the proclamation, "Ho, every

one that thirsts, come." And as we expostulated with the first sort, viz. senseless, secure, unconcerned, proud and conceit standers-aloof, so we bid you earnestly come: And if ye shall say, your conviction hath no edge with it, it is not deep enough: we answer, "Let him that hath no money, come:" If ye have quite given over all hope of your prayers and other performances, as to making your peace with God by them, and have in that respect utterly renounced your own righteousness, and so "have no money, no price:" tho' ye be not pinched and pricked at the heart under the sense of sin and deserved wrath, as ye would: yet come, O come. Or, 3. Ye are such as have taken with your sin and lost state, and are in some measure, tho' but faintly (at least to your own apprehension) stirring towards Christ, and would fain be at him: Up, for to you the offer most kindly says, "Hear, and your souls shall live: eat, and be satisfied." The wares are not brought forth and laid before you, that ye should only (to say so) block or cheapen, and ask the price: but also, and mainly, that ye should buy, eat and feed on them: The gospel doth not, as it were, so much offer to make with you a bargain, as it offers you the benefit of a bargain already made, viz. with Christ. And thus these Three take in every person that wants, and is not (it may be) so sensible of it, and every one that wants and would have.

For the Third, viz. the Terms on which the closing of the bargain depends: They are holden forth in four words in the text, with two qualifications, which make up the terms. The first word is, 'Come:' and that supposeth peoples leaving of their present standing-place and posture, and their moving towards the market-place where the rich ware is exposed to sale. The second word is, 'Buy:' which imports a price put on the market-ware, a valuing of it, and a sort of treating to make it ours. The Third word is, "Hearken, incline the ear," to wit, to God, and to his word, to believe and receive it, "and your souls shall live." And the fourth word is, "I will make an everlasting covenant with you:" which implies an engagement by covenant to the Lord, after hearing and inclining the ear to his word, a striking of hands, and closing with the bargain. Add to these the qualifications, viz. Coming,

buying, striking hands, (as it were) and closing the bargain, and that without offering money or price, money or money-worth, without offering or giving any thing less or more in compensation.

FOURTHLY, Let us see how the gospel puts all this to the market; so that, where it comes, those that are called must either close the bargain, or it will be their own fault. 1. It proclaims the fair (as it were) to all round about, that there are such wares to be had, and at such a price; the rarest and richest wares and commodities, and at the cheapest rates that ever the world heard tell of. 2. It doth not only proclaim, but invite, and double the invitation to come. 3. It not only invites, but puts the invitation so home, that people must either make the price (to say so, tho' it may be soon made, there being in effect no price) and buy, or refuse the bargain: If they will not be at the pains to come in to the shop, as it were, it brings forth the wares and lays them down in the market-place, and (as it were) on stands in the street, and cries, Come, buy, come and enter the covenant freely: And this it doth by a frank offer, by earnest and persuasive inviting, and by the easy conditions that it proposeth the bargain on. It stands in a manner with arms stretched out, ready to receive all comers very freely, whatever their poverty, wants and necessities be; it craves no more but that we willingly take what he offers to put in our hand: "The righteousness of faith faith not, Who shall ascend to heaven? or who shall descend to the depth?" There is nothing now to be suffered, nor to be purchased by any more suffering: "But the word is near thee, in thy heart, and in thy mouth." It lays the ware at our very door (as it were) so that we have no more to do, but to stoop down and take it up; but heartily to say the word, and it is a bargain.

Now, for Application: May we not resume, and say, that there is a good and excellent bargain to be had in the gospel, and on very good and easy terms? 'Tis a market-day, and indeed it were a pity that such wares should be brought to the market, and that few or none should buy; that Christ should (to speak so) open his pack, and sell no wares. Therefore let me say a few words to you for persuading you readily and presently to embrace the offer of this richest bargain. And, in the 1st place, We pray you

believe this truth: Alas! there is little or no faith given to it; souls come straitned, not thoroughly believing that God is putting Christ, grace and glory, heaven and happiness and all to sale: These are 'days of the Son of man,' in a special manner, wherein Christ's fleet (to speak so with reverence) is come home, the shops are now well furnished with rich commodities, all his stands are set out and full of grace. 2dly, Wonder that God hath condescended to make offer of such a bargain to us: that that which cost Christ so very dear, is offered so exceeding cheap to us. 3dly, We exhort and obtest you, that, while these choicest wares are set to sale, ye receive not this offer in vain. Are there any merchants here for such wares? Here is the market, the wares are good and sufficient, and the terms very easy, and the price wondrously low, even so low, that it comes to 'no money, no price:' Can ye possibly wish a better bargain, or more easy terms? Are there any chapmen that 'want money,' any that are 'thirsty,' then come; yea, be the frame and disposition of your heart what it may be, if you would have it righted, come; there is here that which will make you rich and happy here and hereafter. Are there none of you that will seriously ask, what the Lord will say, what Christ will take (as it were) for these wares, or what are his terms, with a sincere resolution to take them on these very terms? Will ye not be prevailed with to make experimental trial, what it is to have Christ "made of God to you wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption?" Are there none among you all that have sins to be pardoned, wants to be supplied, strong and stirring corruptions to be subdued and mortified? Is it possible that so many are come hither for the fashion? Are there none living at distance from God, nor under his curse really or to their own apprehension, that would have the distance and curse removed? Are there no weak graces to be strengthened? If there be any such merchants, that have a mind and heart to the wares; I say to them from the Lord, as his herald, "Ho, every one that thirsts, and he that hath no money, come." This is the scope of the gospel, and the preparation for Christ, and also for the communion, that it calleth for from poor souls, that would fain close the bargain, and set their seal to it, and would have God's seal set to it to-morrow, by taking the sacra-

ment. Speak, what say ye? Pose and put your hearts to it, to declare if they be indeed willing and well content to make and hold the bargain on his own terms; if they be so, (as there is all the reason in the world they should) then, I say, ye have a good bargain: I say again, Speak, pose your hearts, if ye will make and hold the bargain on these terms or not.

There are these things that do singularly commend this bargain. (1.) The excellency of it. Ye will go through all the markets in the world, ere ye get such rich mercies, of so rare a kind, so sure and so cheap: Ye would, belike, think much to have so much land, gold or money; but what are those to this bargain? Those will evanish and turn to ashes, when this will endure and abide with you for ever: What are ye doing? who are like so many horse-leeches, sucking up, and glutting yourselves with the world, or living securely and carelessly, or patching up your own righteousness; is there any of those bargains like this? We appeal to your own consciences, and nothing doubt but they will one day bear witness against you, that ye heard of such a bargain, and had it in your offer, and yet wilfully refused to accept of it. (2.) Is there any bargain more suitable for you who have your peace to make with God, for you who have corruption lively in you, than to have a King, Captain and Conqueror to bring it down, and to trample on it, after he hath as a Priest reconciled you to God? Is there any more suitable bargain for you who have your own pinches and straits, and your comforts at a very low ebb, for you who have wants which cannot be numbred, and who cannot of yourselves command one stayed spiritual thought? If ye were perfectly righteous, and fairly landed in eternity, ye might possibly think the less of it (tho' even glorified saints put a great value on it, and glorious angels admire it) but that sinners dwelling on earth in cottages of clay, whose habitation is in the dust, should think little of it, 'tis strange, and even stupendious: Is there, or can there be a more suitable bargain for you that want money? Is it not exactly calculated for your case, and shapen out for you, so as in every thing it may meet with your wants, difficulties and objections? (3.) Are not the terms most reasonable? No great thing is sought for from you; if a lordship or a kingdom were offered to a

poor man for a penny, that hath no money at all, it would signify nothing at all to him; but, behold, here peace and pardon, grace and glory, even all good things are offered to you freely. (4) Is not your necessity such, that ye cannot be well without it? For, tho' ye should spend your money, and bestow much labour, and even wear out your very eyes with weeping, and your hearts with grief and sorrow, if ye take not this course, all will only have this motto written thereon, "Vanity of vanities, all is but vanity and vexation of spirit." When ye come to feed on it, ye will find it to be but wind. If peace with God, if God and Christ, if grace and glory be necessary, then this bargain is necessary; but if ye will continue lazy, indifferent, lukewarm and unconcerned in the matter, ye shall find that ye have sitten in your own light greatly, and suffered the opportunity of the market to slip, which ye will never possibly recover: And therefore, for the Lord's sake, let neither legal weeping, carnal fear or sorrow, hypocrisy, self-conceit, nor mistakes of Christ and of free grace, divert you from making this bargain; but seek grace, come over these and all other obstructions, and, while the market lasts, "Come and buy without money and without price." It is hard to know how long your day shall last: There are many country sides and cities, in the streets whereof these packs (to say so) of rich wares were opened up, laid forth and exposed to sale, that now for many years, yea for several ages, have not heard of them, nor the gospel preached: What (at least in purity and power) is now in Jerusalem, and in the seven famous Churches of Asia, but the voice of terror, and, as it were, the screaming of owls? And, seeing 'God is not slack, as men count slackness;' what know ye, when the kingdom of God may be taken from you, and given to others; and when he will cry (to speak so) Pack and go? Every day is not a market-day, every Lord's day is not a communion day: Many congregations in Ireland and elsewhere have sadly found this, wherein it hath come to pass, that great scarcity and want are come where there was once great plenty. And, to press this a little further, we may, in the 1st. place, Ask, Whereat it sticks and halts? I tell you, that there either must be a bargain, or it must (and will sometime) be known where the blame

lies: Were it but the bare reading of these very words, they bring the invitation and offer to you; and will ye dare to cast at the wares, or the terms on which they are offered? Grace brings a good bargain to you, and stoops very low with it. For, 1. It will not stand with you on bygones, if now you deal honestly; 'The sure mercies of David' will cover and blot out those. And if any of you think that ye have much debt on your head, as who hath not? it will not upbraid you: "The iniquity of Jacob shall be sought for, and shall not be found." There shall be, as it were, scores drawn through them, your accounts shall be all dashed out by free grace's pen. This is a cried fair and proclaimed market of free grace, from which no honest comer shall be secluded, thrust back or sent away empty; for here an empty purse needs not make a blate or bashful merchant. 2. Grace stands not precisely on fore-preparations, (where souls honestly and sincerely come) as that ye have not been so and so humbled, and have not such and such previous qualifications, as ye would be at: Nay, someway it excludes these, as offering to bring money and some price, which would quite spoil the nature of the market of free grace; nay yet, I lay further, if it were possible that a soul would come without sense of sin, grace would embrace it; sense of sin being no condition of the covenant, but a physical (to speak so) qualification of the covenanter, and grace is free to them that want it. And let it be supposed to be in a person void of grace, and still in unrenewed black nature, 'tis there but a splendid sin, as those shadows of moral virtues in all merely natural men are; grace can, at the instant of coming, create qualifications. There could readily be no qualifications in Zaccheus when he was on the tree; yet Christ tells him, "Salvation this day is come to thy house" 3. Grace stands not on the want of any effect of faith, where it calls to believing: It will not stand on darkness of interest, nor on want of progress in sanctification, nor on things being out of order; for, where it comes, it puts things in order. It will be no relevant exception for a person that hath not closed with the bargain, and hath not embraced Christ, to say, "Alas! I have no love to God, to the godly, and to his interest:" Because grace can say, Thou hast not closed with Christ, and so canst not have the effect before the cause. Come

and close, and these and other effects shall follow. 4. It stands not on degrees of faith, nor on the strength, firmness and height of it; it will take little, even a look, or a glance of the soul's eye that sees not clearly; according to that memorable word, Psal. xxxiv. 5 "They looked to him, and were lightened." The more that souls look to Christ, their eye grows the clearer. It will take an honestly willing mind and hearty consent, tho' the ability be very little; a receiving, or a sincere minding at receiving of the offer: 'Him that cometh,' or is really a-coming, tho' he be not yet come, at least as he thinks, but is, with the prodigal, still (as he apprehends) afar off, 'will Christ and grace in no case cast out;' for no sooner doth spiritual life stir in faith's weakest acting and moving towards Christ, but grace meets it. 5. It stands on no concomitants. Tho' there should be many idols and lusts raging in the person, if there be a real consenting by faith to the bargain, with a sincere resolution to abandon all these, grace will not send him away empty: Or, if the man say, "Lord, I believe, help my unbelief;" that is a done bargain: Nay, were it to come with many spiritual issues and sores running, and with fear to presume, and (as it were) to steal a hint of Christ, not to speak a word to him, but to touch him; he will not be angry nor upbraid, but will say, "Go in peace, thy faith hath made thee whole." We may ask yet further, to the recommendation of grace, (1.) Was there ever a merchant that came to the market with that purpose, to buy on its own terms, that went away empty and without wares? If all the congregation of the first-born were put to it, they would be ready to bear witness, that grace never stood with them on any qualification in them, when they came honestly. (2.) I would ask, Was there ever any that adventured honestly on it, whom it misgave; that hazarded (to speak so) and yet fell by the way; or that ever repented themselves that they hazarded and entrusted their souls to this bargain? (3.) Let me ask, Was there ever any that took hold on and gripped it, in whose hand it brake? The bargain and covenant is everlasting, the mercies are sure mercies; once sure, and always sure; once rich, and for ever so: It was and is a "Covenant well ordered in all things, and sure." Blessed for ever be the Contriver and Surety thereof. Some may possibly think, that this

doctrine looks to be somewhat lax or loose : But sure grace is not lax ; for, as we may say of God's power, " Is any thing too hard for him ? " So we may say of his grace, " Is any thing too free for it ? " Only abuse not grace, prostitute it not, turn not your back on it, neither turn it into wantonness : If ye look on grace, and cheapen only, and do not buy ; or if ye bid for one piece of it only, and not for all ; wo unto you, that ever it was offered unto you. What would ye be at ? Is it holiness, heaven and happiness, and that freely ? They are here : Is it Christ, and Christ freely, and all that is his ? He is here in your offer ? What means then this whining (to speak so) and standing so much on terms, as if the way of grace were a hard, untoward, unpassable way, and as if God were a hard Master ? Nay, 'tis a good, soft, sweet, easy way, and plain to them that walk in it ; and God the best Master that ever rich or poor served, and the easiest to serve, and the best to please, where there is sincerity and willingness to live honestly : He pities and spares all upright-hearted servants, " as a father pitieth his children, and a man spareth his son that serveth him." And, if any think they find it otherwise, 'tis most certainly their own fault. Therefore, I beseech you, study, 1. To be in case to take grace's wares home with you, repentance, faith, hope, love, mortification, meekness, patience, &c. These things are in the covenant betwixt Christ and you, and set to sale in the market. 2. Be making ready, for the market is ready : Many shops (as it were) are opened, and much precious ware laid out ; bring empty vessels, and not a few, that ye may carry them away full, that ye may take a rich loading home with you. Tho' you take up never so much of this ware, it will never be missed nor grow the less. And indeed it is a part, and a considerable part of our preparation for the communion, to be rooted in the faith of these great things, and to get our affections stretched, dilated and widened to receive them ; to get " the everlasting doors cast up, that the King of glory may come in ; " that, when he calls for entry, the doors may be opened at the very first knock. 3. If so be your desires be stirred up, and your appetites quickened in any measure, there is nothing that will more effectually and powerfully stir them up, provoke and sharpen them, than grace believingly looked to, and improved. Longing to

see his power and glory, as they have been seen by his people in the sanctuary, would notably make way for him. Pleading and working with your own hearts alone, will not do the business, but grace employed and made use of will do it effectually and to purpose; and, the more grace you draw forth out of Christ's fulness, and drink, so much the better: It will be (to speak so) no forestalling of the market; neither will the sweet savour of the perfume be the weaker or less to-morrow, that ye break the box of this precious ointment to-night. Now, God himself, who proclaims the fair, sets the market, and exposeth the rich ware to sale, give you wisdom to prove wise merchants, to your eternal advantage and upmaking.



S E R M O N VII.

A SERMON Preached after the COMMUNION.

On PSAL. lxxxv. 8.

*He will speak peace to his people, and to his saints:
But let them not turn again to folly.*

IT is hard to know, in spiritual exercises, whether it be more difficult to attain some good-frame, or to keep and maintain it when it is attained; whether more seriousness is required for making peace with God, or for keeping of it when made; whether more diligence should be in preparing for a Communion, or more watchfulness after it: Sure, both are required; and it was our blessed Lord's word, Matth. xxvi. 41. after the first celebration of this his Supper, "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation." Here that saying holds eminently, "*Non minor est virtus, quam quærere, paria tueri.*" No less virtue and valour is requisite to maintain, than to make a purchase or conquest.

In the words (to leave the introduction and scope) there are, 1. A great mercy promised from the Lord to his people, viz. "He will speak peace to them." 2. A special caveat and advertisement given them, pointing at their hazard, "But let them not turn again to folly:" That is, let not his people and saints, to whom he hath spoken peace, return to sin; let them beware of bounding and dallying with God's mercy, and of turning his grace into wantonness, of cooling in their affections to him, of slipping back to their old way, and of embracing their old lovers and idols; for that is folly, even in folio, to speak so.

We shall first propose six Observations from the words, and then apply them. First then, Observe, "That sin against God is an exceeding great folly; 'tis the foolishhest and maddest thing in the world:" Therefore it is here called Folly, to wit, in an eminent way and degree. 'Tis that which doth most, yea, that which doth in effect only mar and interrupt saints peace. That which, ver. 2. is called Iniquity, which he so graciously pardoned, is here called Folly, because of the folly and madness that is in sin: And it is on this ground and account, that the sinner is so often called a Fool, and Simple, in the book of Proverbs; and, Eph. v. the apostle exhorts Christians to "walk, not as fools, but as wise:" and, Luke xv. the prodigal is said, when converted, to 'come to himself,' as if he had been in a distraction and beside himself all the while he was going on in his sinful way. This may be further clear, if we look, 1. To the vanity of the matter wherein men sin. Is it not folly for a man to sit tippling and debauching away his time, to be given to harlotry and filthiness, to neglect prayer, to curse and swear, to let his mind rove upon things that never were nor will be, and wherein there is no profit? There is a great vanity in the matter of sin. 2. If we look to the sad effects and bitter fruits of sin, and to the great prejudice that comes by it, it will be found to be desperate madness, and dear-bought pleasure, which is but fancied and imaginary, and no real pleasure; it mars the life of grace and of peace with God, and "treasures up wrath against the day of wrath:" See this verified eminently in Ahithophel, that prodigy of profound policy ("whose counsel in those days, with David and Absalom, was, as if one had enquired at the Oracle of God,") the upshot of

whose deep wit was rank folly, when he went and hanged himself: See it also convincingly made good, in the rich man in the gospel, to whom 'tis sadly and surprisngly said, "Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be taken from thee, and whose then shall those things be?" And what advantage or wisdom is it, I pray, for a man to "gain the whole world, if he lose his own soul?" O madly foolish bargain! 3. If we look to sin with a spiritual eye, we will see folly in the very appearance and manner of it; a wicked man in sinning is foolish-like, or looks as like a fool, as David did, when he played the mad-man before the king of Gath, "scrabbling on the doors, and let his spittle fall on his beard." Is it not folly to see a man "labouring in the fire for very vanity, loading himself with thick clay, pursuing the east wind?" He is just like a man in a frenzie, who imagines himself to be a king, and to be riding in great state and triumph, when in the mean-time he is a poor, naked, pitiful and despicable creature, in the eyes of all that behold him. 4. If we look to the spring, fountain and cause of it, there can be no just nor relevant reason given for sin; 'tis therefore, no doubt, folly. Is there, or can there be any thing that evidenceth men's folly so much, as their coming in tops with God, their walking in the way of death, their loving simplicity, (as it is, Prov. i.) and their quitting the way of life? Now, the word of God is true wisdom, and the way of life is therein clearly holden forth, and God as our Pattern; and is there any thing more reasonable, than that we should live like, and be conform to the word of God, and to him of whom we ought to be followers? But sin thwarts with the whole word of God, and with God himself.

Take this passing word of Use: Study to be established in the faith of this truth, That sin, whether in doing that which is evil, or in the omission of duty, is the greatest folly. Such of you as will not be convinced of it now in time, within a few days or years ye shall be convinced of it to purpose, and to your eternal prejudice; the most blockish shall then see it to be folly, as highly hurtful, prejudicial, shameful folly, and desperate madness; the rich glutton and Ahithophel, and thousands more of worldly wise-men, find it so to be so, to their cost, in hell: Therefore the apostle saith, Rom. vi. 21. "What profit have ye in

those things whereof ye are now ashamed?" And, had we spiritual eyes to discern the condition of the most part of men and women, who evidently ly still in black nature unrenewed, who slight the offers of grace, and who will not receive Jesus Christ; the veriest idiot in the world would not be a sadder spectacle to us, nor affect our hearts with more pity and compassion, than the lamentable case of the souls of such persons would; because "they forsake their own mercy, the sure mercies of David, and follow after lying vanities," and weary themselves with a vain pursuit after that which cannot profit them. A'as! for this folly!

SECONDLY, Observe, "That, notwithstanding the greatness of this folly, God's people and saints were sometimes deep, yea even drowned in it, and are yet in part taken with it." Needs this any proof? "Ah! sinful nation, (saith the Lord to his professing people, Isa. i. 4.) a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evil-doers: The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib; but my people doth not know:" O beastly Israel! inferior to the very brutes thro' the folly of sinning against God; and saith he, Jer. ii. "Be astonished, O heavens, and horribly afraid; for my people have committed two great evils, they have forsaken me the fountain of living waters, and digged to themselves broken cisterns, that can hold no water." O egregious folly and demented choice! How many professors of religion are there, who are foolish virgins? and how many foolish practices are there among the godly themselves? Let it not then be thought strange (as a word of Use from it) that not only among external professors, but even among real saints, there be found many acts of folly; tho' I grant it to be both sad and stumbling when it is; which should, therefore, so much the more make them guard against the same.

THIRDLY, Observe, "God will sometimes speak peace to them that are given to folly, or are often found playing the fool." Of the truth whereof, as many as ever heard the gospel, and did partake of the grace of it, and are before the throne, and hope to be there, are as so many proofs, witnesses and living monuments. I shall clear what this 'speaking of peace,' is, in Three steps: He speaks peace to them, 1. In his offering of peace to them, and by his meet-

ing and treating with them in and by that offer, in his intreating or inviting them earnestly to come to him, who have wearied themselves, and spent their labour on that which profits not; pressing them to return, and assuring them that he will heal their backslidings, Isa. lv: Jer. iii. Hof. xiv. and preaching peace through Christ Jesus Eph. ii. counselling them to come and buy eye-salve of him, &c. and by his knocking and waiting at their door for admittance and entry, Rom. iii. Are not these words of peace to a foolish Church? 2 In making peace with some, when (as it is, 2 Cor. v. 20.) he not only prays and requests them to be reconciled, but really reconcileth them to himself, and saith, "Peace be to you: pardoneth sin, taketh away the hand-writing of ordinances that was against them," giveth them a discharge of their debt; that, when their "sin is sought for, it is not to be found, because he hath pardoned it:" And, Hof ii. this is called 'an alluring,' or (as the word is) 'a speaking to the heart.' 3. In his not only taking away the controversy, and making peace; but in his intimating that peace, saying to the pardoned sinner, 'Thy sins are forgiven thee. go in peace, I am thy salvation.' And then the promise, John xiv. 21, 23. is fulfilled, when Christ breaks open doors, and comes in and sups, and dwells, his Father and He; and one main dish that is set on the table (to say so) is Peace, as ver. 27. 'Peace I leave with you, my Peace I give unto you,' 'Tis peace from God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. There are some special times wherein God speaks peace, such as solemn treating times and communion-days; and other special occasions are, when there hath been more than ordinary diligence in prayer, more than ordinary sorrow for sin, peace is readily spoken on the back of it; as also, trying and sadly exercising times are usually times of the intimation of peace: In a word, when and where his gospel comes, and is made lively, peace follows on it; and this is your time. O that peace may be found to have been spoken to many at this occasion!

FOURTHLY. Observe. "That in and about those times, when God hath spoken (or very urgently offered to speak) peace, there is often some restraint on people, as to the prevailing of their folly:" Some stop to the current of

iniquity in its wonted manner and measure, in some more, and in some less; some more awe of God readily being on people then: Many will have a sort of righteousness, like a "morning-cloud and early dew, that soon passeth away;" Some tickling of their affections, that quickly vanisheth; as the Lord saith of many of the Jews, that were hearers of John, who "was a burning and a shining light, that they rejoiced in his light for a season:" So, Psal. cvi. 12. "Then believed they his words, they sang his praise; but they soon forgot his works, they waited not for his counsel." And, Psal. lxxviii. 34. "When he slew them, then they sought him: Nevertheless they flattered him with their lips, and lied to him with their tongues: for their hearts were not right with God, neither were they stedfast in his covenant." And something of this was also even in Christ's hearers, and in the Galatians, who at first "would have plucked out their eyes, and given them to Paul:" So in the parable of the sower, some seed springs up and hath a fair appearance, but soon withereth; and other some holds out: So likewise at fasts and communions, affections will be readily somewhat stirred and warmed, and there will be many brave purposes, and resolutions, such as were in the people, Exod. xix. when they said, "All that the Lord commands we will do." And they look demur and grave-like, for two or three days: the tippler keeps some days from the tavern; he that prayed not in secret nor in his family, will, it may be, pray for some time about and after such occasions; others will go further on: And yet it is but some restraint on their sin, or some fit and flash of affection, that is transient and quickly gone; and "they turn again to folly." And even the godly themselves are here often found in a great measure guilty, as the following Note will clear.

FIFTHLY, Observe, "That even those people and saints, who have sometime been given to folly, to whom God hath spoken peace, and who have restrained their folly for a time, thereafter may much fall back to folly again." The admonition here given, "Let them not turn again to folly," supposeth this. This needs not much proof: If ye shall go through the saints recorded in scripture, ye will find sad instances of it; David, after

peace was spoken to him, falls into adultery and murder: Hezekiah, after a sweet word of peace was spoken to him, Isa xxxviii. falls into the folly of pride and vain ostentation, Chap. xxxix. Peter, after peace spoken to him, denieth his Master: Jehoshaphat, after peace spoken to him, fell once and again into the same sin, and once even after he was reprov'd for it; as is clear, 2 Chron. xviii. xix. and xx. Chapters. Or there may be a falling into some other sins, or out of one sin into another; as it was with David: This may befall real saints, yea eminent saints, even pillars in the house of God. Was there not peace spoken to the disciples, in that sweet sermon, John xiv. xv. and xvi. Chapters, and yet that sad word follows, 'Ye all shall be offended because of me this night:' and Peter, to whom that sweet word was spoken, 'I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not,' doth foully fall into folly quickly after: What then may befall the more common sort of professors, who know not what it is to stand before the least temptation? The Reasons of this may be, 1. Because the devil falls presently on, and seeks, as it were, with seven worse devils to re-enter the soul, and busks this bait of the temptation, and presents it in a new shape; old courtiers (to speak so) and lusts set on, and essay what hearing they can get. 2. Because tho', by peace spoken, temptations and corruptions may be bound up, yea, and somewhat mortified; yet they are not slain outright; they may lurk for a time, but still live. And, 3. Because his people are ready in such a warm sun-blink to grow (as it were) wanton, and under such a cessation from their lusts, to cast by their arms, to grow secure, to grow somewhat too vain, and to dream of an easy life; thus it was in a measure with David, as he confesseth, Psal. xxx. 'I said in my prosperity, I shall never be moved.' If they get peace for a little, who but they? 'They are lords (in a manner) and will not come unto him:' or, if they win to a few tears and some liberty, they are readily puffed up, and in some sort bid their souls take them self; as if they needed to trouble themselves no more: Therefore there are new on-sets, and the Lord lets them see how vain they are, even in their best estate; as we may perceive, in the Lord's dealing with

Hezekiah, and with David, in that Psal. xxx. 'Thou didst hide thy face (saith he) and I was troubled.' O what folly, vanity and out-breaking of corruption do often follow on the back of a seeming work of turning to God, and a tender-like frame in professors of religion! So, Psal. cvi. it is said, that 'they provoked him at the sea, even at the Red-sea.' Even where and when they were in such a frame, that 'they believed his words, and sang his praise; they soon forgot his works, and waited not for his counsel.' Which was, in a manner, at the very table to 'lift the heel against him.' And O how sad and lamentable a thing is it, to be unwatchful after a communion, and an offer or an intimation of peace!

SIXTHLY, Observe, "That there is nothing more called for from a people, who have been given to folly, and have had peace spoken to them, than to take heed that they turn not again to folly;" to take heed that they fall not into the same sins that they seemed to have abandoned and turned away from; that it be not with them, 'according to the true proverb, The dog is returned to his vomit, and the sow that was washed, to her wallowing in the mire,' as it is, 2 Pet. ii. 22. Under which similitude, the apostle powerfully dissuades professors of religion from turning again to sin, by shewing the loathsomeness of it; it being as abominable, as a man's licking up that again which he hath vomited. This then is the duty that the Lord calls for: 1. That you should abstain from the sins that you have been given to, such as tippling, drinking drunk, swearing, sabbath-breaking, neglect of prayer and the like, and do so no more; not only not to relapse into the same sins, but that ye abstain from every other sin: It is not enough that a man break off from one sin, and take up with another; it is not sufficient, tho' a man will not be drunk in his neighbour's house, if in the mean time in his own house he tipple, play the good-fellow, (as ye call it) and mispend his time. 2. Ye would consider, what engagements and resolutions ye have come under, and that ye fall not back from them: In a word, it is, Not to be as ye were wont to be; and that ye be found in no known sin, nor defective in any known duty.

We come now to the more particular and close application of the whole, in these Two Uses. The First whereof

is, for Advertisement and Warning, 'Let him that stands, take heed lest he fall:' Let him not look on himself as incapable to be stolen off his feet: Alas! persons may be in a manner exalted to heaven, and in a very good frame, in their own imagination and apprehension, and it may be in some measure really; and yet be brought back to the puddle and mire again, after they have shaken themselves and come out of it. In prosecuting this, we shall, 1. Shew wherefore we press it: And, 2. Wherein, or in reference to what we press it.

As for the first, viz. Wherefore it is that I do press this Advertisement: And indeed it is not without very good ground, as ye will easily perceive, if, 1. Ye look to, and consider the best saints, and in their best condition; how soon are even they taken off their feet? Was not David often in a very good spiritual condition? and yet, how soon and foully did he fall into folly? Was not Adam in a good and desirable condition, when there was no quarrel betwixt God and him, nor any ground for it? and yet how soon was he ensnared? Was not Peter in a good state and frame, when Christ said to him, 'Blessed art thou Simon Bar-jona; flesh and blood hath not revealed that unto thee, but my Father who is in heaven?' and yet, within a very little, he turns again so far to folly, as to be the devil's instrument to tempt Christ; as is clear from Matth. xvi. 17. compared with ver. 22. Were not the disciples in a good condition, when our Lord had preached to them both the preparation and thanksgiving sermons, before and after the communion? and yet 'they all were offended because of him, and forsook him and fled,' and that very quickly, even that same very night. Now, when such tall cedars fall, what need have we, who are but in comparison silly shrubs, and but as small straws, to take warning? 2. If we consider, that these sins and falls were often exceeding sudden, the same night, in the disciples (as I just now hinted) and in Hezekiah, very quickly after his recovery; exceeding foul, and exceeding universal, as in all the disciples; sometimes repeated, as in Lot, Jeholaphat, and Peter; sometimes a plurality and variety of them joined together, as in David and Aia, and in his people at the Red sea and in the wilderness: And who

knows but the same very night, that ye were at the Lord's table, some of you were back at your folly? and others of you before night, may be. We said, not only suddenly, but foully; as is clear in Adam, who, when he had no corruption formerly, fell from God to the devil: (and, by the way, many of you are so grossly ignorant, and wofully self-conceited, that ye think, if ye had been in his case, ye would not have done so.) And (as I hinted) what foul faults were David's adultery and murder, and Solomon's idolatry, at least his tolerating it, after 'God had spoken twice to him?' What a foul fault and fall was that of Israel's, after their so solemn engagements, and fair undertakings, *Exod. xix.* when within forty days they detestably and damnably danced before the golden calf? and what a foul fall was that of Peter's, to forswear Christ, by denying him with an oath? and of the rest of the disciples, unkindly and unworthily to forsake him and flee? And who knows but, shortly after this occasion, many of you that have been tipplers, may grow worse, it may be, even to be found staggering in the streets? and that others of you, who prayed not before, may be heard cursing? Ye who are believers and saints indeed, would observe this, and know that there is need, great need of 'watching and prayer, that ye enter not into temptation:' And if there hath been any idleness, lightness, vanity, mispending of precious time, or the like; guard. O guard against those. The reason why believers fall so often in gross sins, is their playing (as it were) with their petty idols; little things, given way to, lead on to greater and worse. 3. Am I now speaking of any strange, uncouth or unprecedented thing? Have ye never observed, how ye carried and behaved after communions before? Can ye say, but that, as many communions as ye have been at, there have been as many breaches? If ye have never failed before, ye may be secure now; but, if ye have failed and miscarried formerly, be the more wary and watchful now. 4. Have ye any knowledge of, and acquaintance with your own hearts? Is your corruption dead? Are your idols quite slain? or are they not rather like to those strange wives, in Nehemiah's time, (who were put away) crying on you for pity, (O cruel pity!) and weeping on you to be admitted to come home again? And have none of you so much foolish,

fond and cruel pity, as to side with them? Hath a communion-day thrust out the devil fully? Are there no living lusts, nor strong corruptions within you? Do ye not see what a ready welcome temptations to sin are like to get? and find ye not a woful propension to be glad that the restraint and aw-band of a communion-day is over and by? and doth not this press you to watch? 5. Try but how it hath been with you since the sabbath: Is not the bent ye had then, already very much slack'd? Is not much of that seeming or really good frame of spirit gone? Is not the great part of your work yet before you? And is it not a greater difficulty, to make out an engagement, than to make it; to perform, than to promise? How is it then, that ye have in a great part laid by your arms, as if all were done? When ye have, as soldiers, put yourselves in battle-array, and given your military oath, and gotten the sign and word of command, shou'd you quit your post? beware of that; the matter is of greater concernment, than ye are aware of: Ye are yet but in a manner beginning.

For the Second thing, viz. What it is wherein, or in reference to what we do press your taking warning, and being wary? And here I would have you, 1. To be aware not only of more gross sins, but even of all such things in general, which temptations use ordinarily to make their approaches and assaults by; as namely, little sins; (little, I mean comparatively) 'Is it not a little one?' saith Lot of Zoar. O how unsuitable was it for him, to whom the Lord had but a very little before spoken such a great and gracious word of peace, as that, 'Depart, for I can do nothing so long as thou art here:' and yet the same night, or the morrow, this escapes him! And readily, when people fall once, they fall over and over again; but ye would beware to seek leave to lurk and loure a while in such Zoars: Beware to say, It is a little sin; say not, I shall not be drunken, but I must have leave to tippie and trifle over the time. The devil drives sin and temptation, as a carpenter driveth a wedge; he will teach and prompt you to say, We may be cheerful and sport us a while, without regard to the matter, measure or season, tho' ye be not profane: But once let in the point of the wedge by a little sin, and it may become a great one ere all be done, or a grosser one may follow, even as the great end of the wedge

doth the lesser. 2. Beware of returning to omissions: Some, it may be, will resolve that they will never tittle, nor swear, nor commit any such things; but they will, it may be, neglect and omit to pray as they have (belike) done these few days past: Tho' they go not abroad to the tavern on the week days, nor go idly in the fields on the Lord's day, yet they may mispend and trifle away their time at home; as if falling back into omissions, were not a turning again to folly, as well as falling back to commissions. The confessions of many poor creatures (who become publickly and prodigiously scandalous) on their death-beds or on a scaffold, that omissions of duty have predisposed them to, and brought on those gross commissions, may and should awake and alarm us; Ye would therefore, with holy Job, 'make a covenant with your eyes,' and other senses, and make conscience to keep it. 3. Beware of falling back to a secure coldrise manner of going about duties of worship alone or in company, in publick or in private: Let none of you think with yourselves, that, now this solemnity is over, ye need not wrestle in prayer, nor watch so strictly over your heart, but let it gad and rove, and not hedge it in on an ordinary Lord's day, as on a communion Lord's day; since there is no liberty allowed for an idle word or thought any day, more than there is on that day: Think it not enough that ye say your prayers morning and evening, and that none can charge you with any offence: God, the all-seeing God, observes you, whether you be universal, sincere and serious in the duties of religion. 4. Beware of neglecting spiritual and gospel-duties; such as, self-examination or self-searching, self-denial, mortification, and use-making of Christ: The neglect of these, and the like, may be some way called gospel-folly. It is no doubt great gospel-folly, when Christ (being freely and fully offered therein) is not improved for wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption; when the power of godliness is not aimed at in duty, but people rest and sit down in the form thereof, which yet in some respect is more cumbersome than the power; for Christ improved makes all things go easily with us: Therefore, any of you who have looked on it as folly to neglect these spiritual duties, see that ye return not again to that folly. 5. Beware of unbelief: Have ye not resolved to cast out with that evil, and resol-

ved to be no more jealous of God, tho' ye should meet with difficulties? Believers in Christ, lick not up that vomit again, 'turn not again to that folly,' to which there is a secret natural bentness of heart: If (I say) unbelief and jealousy be a folly, take it not up, turn not to it again.

6. Beware of heart-ills. Possibly ye will not give way to more gross evils, and yet suffer your souls to be carried away after idols, or after vain, proud, ambitious, covetous, revengeful, filthy and lascivious thoughts: But, if in very deed Christ get the heart, he must reign in it, and command the eye, tongue, ears, hands, feet and all.

7. Beware of falling back to the inordinate love of the world, and of letting the heart be too much addicted and glued to, even, lawful pleasures and creature-comforts, to your callings, wives, children, houses, lands and incomes of gain and profit; from which there hath been possibly some suitable abstractedness these days past. Ye should not only abstain from oppressing, stealing and deceiving; but ye would also guard against falling back to excessive pursuing after, and (as it were) glutting yourselves with the things of this world, however lawful in themselves. Alas! *primus licitis*: Inordinate love to, and immoderate pursuing after things lawful in themselves, destroy more souls, than things sinful and unlawful in themselves do: The excuses of those invited to the marriage of the King's Son, are founded, not on things simply simply sinful, but on lawful things, the farm, oxen, and married wife. Now the house is swept, and ye are in hazard, if ye guard not, to return to a greater and greedier feeding on those vanities. I dare say, there are multitudes of men and women, who never so much hungred for the communion, as they have longed to have these solemn days over and by, that they might win back to their callings, worldly business and pleasures: O what a weariness have they been to them? as sacred solemnities were to those spoken of, Amos viii. 5. who cried, "When shall the new-moon be gone, that we may sell corn, and the sabbath-day, that we may set out wheat?" To many these days of fasting and spiritual feasting and communicating have been as a bridle bit in their mouths, to restrain them from running on the mountains of their vanity: and who knows but, ere another communion come, the Lord may 'feed you as a lamb in a large place?'

The Second Use is for Exhortation. Would you then know the duty that ye are called unto? this is it, "Let not God's people and saints turn again to folly." Let not the idler return to his idleness, the tippler to his tippling, the scoffer to his scoffing; the ignorant, who have been at a little pains to learn some questions before the examination and communion, to his negligence in seeking after knowledge, &c. Let not this be: if ye have vomited out these and other sins, lick them not up again. To press this Use a little, we would, 1. Give you some considerations from the text. 2. Some directions to help you forward in the practice of it.

For the First, viz. Some considerations from the text to press it. 1. Is it not a folly to sin once? If so, sure it is much more to relapse into sin. Whether is it more true wisdom to abstain from those sins, or to fall back into them? Is it not more wisdom for you, who have been given to tippling or drunkenness, to neglect of prayer, and the like, now to let alone sin, and to give yourselves to prayer, than to be walking in the street on the plain-stones? Is it not more wisdom to be given to edifying discourse, than to be laughing and sporting over the time? Is it not better to come to the Church, than to spend the time idly, in discouraging and waiting for a temptation? And if your conscience assent to the truth of this, then we take witness in your conscience, that it doth so; and this instrument of witness will stand on record against you, if ye shall turn to those sins and to this folly again. 2. Have ye been examining yourselves? and do ye find, that much of your life hath been spent in folly, by some twenty, by some thirty, by some forty, by some fifty, by some sixty years; and every day's account cast up amounts only to folly, vanity and madness? And is it not enough, and may it not suffice you, that ye have spent so long time in folly, tho' ye spend no more so? 3. Hath not God been speaking peace to some, and given them the intimation of it? so that their souls have been made to say, 'God is here.' And have they not gotten the bargain closed, and the hand-writing that was against them torn? We hope, there are some such among us. Nay, are there any, but the Lord hath been offering peace to them, treating with them, saying, 'Behold me, behold me!' intreating and request-

ing them to be reconciled? And hath there not been some tickling of the affections of many? If so, will ye be such-fools as to fall back, and to wear out the sense of that peace and warmth that any of you have win to? And ye with whom God hath been meeting and treating about the pardon of sin, what a folly will it be, in place of getting a discharge, to increase and multiply your debt? 4. Are there not some engagements on you? Or, whatever be real, is there not a profession of coming under engagements? Are not the vows of God on some of you? Is there not some sin that hath stared you in the face, which ye have resolved to abstain from? And hath there not been some stirring and tickling of desires to perform what ye have resolved and engaged to? And will ye break all these bands? Will ye repent and run that ever ye engaged to God? If so, as ye notably play the fools, so the Lord will be about with you, and even spew you out of his mouth, that ye may puddle your fill in the mire of sin. 5. Is there not a great bentness and propension in all naturally to turn again to folly? Is there not 'an evil heart of unbelief, ready to depart from the living God?' I have so much charity for you, as that you will grant this; and when the Lord hath said, 'Watch,' and tells that 'he is at hand that betrays you,' will ye go securely, and not take warning? O what desperate folly would this be! 6. Consider what will come of it, if ye shall fall back, if ye slacken your bent, and, growing cold, turn again to folly? Ye will wear out any bit of good frame that ye have obtained: Ye will blur and sully the real or supposed clearness of your interest, mar your peace, and become in a manner more beastly and swinish in your sinful way than before; at the very thoughts whereof, your hearts should scar, nauseate, and even grow sick. And what will be the upshot thereof? Either ye will repent, or never repent: If ye say, ye will repent; are ye sure that God will give you repentance, if ye shall hazard on some sin? Are not many given up to hardness of heart, who never come to repentance? Know ye what repentance is? have ye not been already essaying and doing somewhat at repentance, and have ye not found it difficult and hard to come by? And, if ye shall sin yet more, will not repentance be yet a greater, more difficult and hard work? And, suppose ye

should get repentance, ye shall know the truth of that saying, Jer. ii. "That it was an evil and a bitter thing to depart from the living God, and that his fear was not before your eyes." O what shame and confusion of face will it bring with it, to remember that we had so many warnings from the word without, and so many convictions and challenges from our conscience within, and that yet we went over them, and with a high hand went on in our folly! Will those things be little, think ye? What pleasure or profit can ye have in "those things, whereof ye will be ashamed?" Yea, suppose ye come to repentance (and a hundred to one if ever ye come to it) ye shall weep and mourn bitterly, that ever ye hazarded so on sin, over your light and convictions, and over the belly of your conscience. If ye get not repentance (as I am afraid many never shall) what will come of it? Convictions and challenges will wear out, the heart will grow harder; you will go on laughing at reproofs, mocking at exhortations to repentance and reformation, and regardlessly treading on what might reclaim you; you will be angry at them who brought you under any engagements; ye will become very Atheists in your hearts, and as so many profane Heathens in your carriage: And when you have lived thus for a time, (and the Lord knows how long) will ye not come to die? will not your month come on you? will not your bed take you, or ye take your bed; and then the conscience will either awake, or be silent: If it awake, will not this be your language, which is the language of many a poor wretched creature? Wo is me, I have mispent my time, and have been glutting myself with the world and sinful pleasures; Oh vain world! O bewitching and beguiling world! Alas that ever I was so much taken up with it! And, if the conscience be quiet, what will come of it? Will that sin ly on, and not be sought account of? Know ye not, consider ye not that word, Gal. vi. "Be not deceived, God will not be mocked; as men sow, so they shall reap?" Think ye that God will be inferior to the creature? will not your governor or landlord seek account of you according to your engagement; and shall not the Lord call you to a reckoning? Yea certainly: And the conscience will then awake and roar on you; then the curse, wo and damnation will seize upon, and

take hold of your soul in death; and devils shall carry it thither, where hypocrites are, until the judgment of the great day; and then ye will say, Turning again to sin was the greatest folly and madness: And thus, whether God have a purpose of repentance to you or not, ye shall one day rue it at all the veins of your heart (to speak so) and shall find the folly of it, and that to your everlasting prejudice and loss, if ye repent not.

And therefore, let me press this use upon you, and earnestly exhort you to let these considerations sink down into your ears and hearts: Beloved, "we are jealous over you," and would God it "were with a suitable godly jealousy!" We are afraid that many, ere we be aware, be down in their former puddle, that ignorance and profanity be as ripe as ever; there have been so many fits and good appearances, and of so short continuance heretofore: And now ye have been making some mint; but what will come of it, if ye fall back? If these ordinances shall do you no good, we know not what will do it: I think ye were never nearer to some great crisis, to a nick of being lost or gained; we have you (as it were) "in the very place of the breaking forth of children," so that now you must be either safely and fairly delivered, or prove abortives. Ah! are our fasts and communions to no purpose? Are all your purposes and resolutions, your engagements, and seeming willingness to engage, in vain and to no effect? If ye shall fall back after this, and turn again to folly, I do not much expect that any ordinances or future engagements shall do you much good: We must either look for better and more fruit, or there will be more barrenness and stubbornness; either ye shall be more holy, or more of that old sin of malignity, stoutness of heart against God, and more opposition to godliness shall bud amongst you: We would from our very souls wish you brought well thorow, but are afraid there be a sticking. Why is it, I pray, that we insist so much with you, if we were not jealous over you? Will ye have faces to hold up before God, when ye and we shall be reckoned with, if ye shall sit these warnings? or, what heart can we have to go about his service amongst you, if yet there be a sticking; and when there is some wrestling to get you up the hill (as it were) and ye run

further down than ever? O to be mightily helped of God to travail in birth, to have Christ formed in you, and formed in you again! Is it probable, when many of you are brought further up than before, if ye fall further back, that ever ye will win up again? We apprehend, that there are many of you, who shall never again, with so much moral seriousness, be wrought upon, if there shall not be now some abiding and effectual work, but a "turning again to folly." It is not, beloved hearers, the fruit of one preaching or two, that we are now driving at; but the great scope of this blessed gospel: Therefore, for Christ's sake, hold at it, come forward, and go not back; O "turn not again to folly:" Else be assured, that the Lord and your own consciences will bear witness, and we his servants will also bear witness against you, (as many of you will bear witness against us, if we shall do so) if, after God hath spoken peace to you, ye shall return again to folly. Let me yet add this one word further, for pressing this: Will ye but consider what we are seeking? is it not your real good and advantage? is it any hard or unreasonable thing that we crave of you, or any uncouth thing, or any thing but that which Abraham, David, Paul, and others of the saints, were desirous and studious to be at, yea, and our blessed Lord Jesus himself was content to be at? Tho' he was never indeed tainted with any folly, yet he was content and careful to fulfil all righteousness; and what seek we of you, but that ye would seek and labour to imitate him; that ye would prevent your own loss and ruin, and give Christ a kindly and a hearty welcome, in order to the exercise of all his offices about you; that "his heart may be made glad, and that he may see of the fruit of the travail of his soul to his satisfaction," in the salvation of a number of souls in Glasgow? O that we could get you prevailed with to be as serious in these things, as ye are in and for the things of this present life; and that we could get as great vent (to speak so) for Christ's precious wares amongst you, as a man would get for some rare commodity, nay (may I, or shall I say?) but even for tobacco! Alas that incomparably precious Jesus Christ, and his purchase, the everlasting covenant, even "the sure mercies of David," should have less vent and sale, than that and an hundred other commodities have! this is a lamentation, and should be for a

lamentation. Always let bygones be seriously reflected on, and see that by all means ye "turn not again to folly."

As for the Second thing proposed, viz. Some Directions, for preventing your turning again to folly: Ye may take these few, and the Lord himself put them home with a strong hand. 1st, then, Walk in fear: "Serve the Lord in fear, and rejoice before him with trembling. "The wise man sees the evil, but the fool passeth on and is confident." There is a sort of spiritual pride, vanity and self-conceit, reigning amongst ordinary professors, and too much of it prevailing amongst believers, that undoes them. Are there any of you afraid of fornication and adultery, or of turning giddy sectaries and the like? Your want of fear brings you into the mire ere ye be aware: "Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty mind before a fall." The little fear that is amongst the most part says, that some black turn (as we use to speak) is in their hands, or some foul fall before them: Hence the apostle, Philip. ii. 12. exhorts, "Work out the work of your own salvation with fear and trembling:" and, 2 Cor. vii. 1. to "perfect holiness in the fear of God." 2dly, Observe well and lay due weight on that exhortation of our Lord, Matth. xxvi. 41. (which hath several directions in it) "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation:" Look about you, be not secure, stand by your post, let nothing go out nor come in without strict examination, and seek (as it were) after its pass, and set (as it were) a sentinel at the port of every sense: "And what I say unto you, I say unto all, Watch," saith the Lord, Mark xiii. 37. Be not secure; watching is a most suitable duty for Christ's soldiers: Fail not to join with it much prayer, not for the fashion, but that which is in the Spirit and fervent; yet lay no weight on it, as if ye could merit any thing by it, but go about it humbly and seriously, in order to the entertaining the life of grace; sit not up in it, but rather double your diligence. 3dly, Keep the heart well; heart-ills are the principal ills: "Keep (saith Solomon, Prov. iv.) the heart with (or above) all keeping:" set your main force to guard it, for there Satan keeps his court and head-quarter, and thence gives his orders to the outward senses: Dally not with sin in the heart, else it will come a further length. 4thly, Forget

not your engagements, but let the vows of God ly on you, and have due weight with you: Let not the sins that ye discovered and saw in your self-examination between God and you, before ye came to the communion-table, be forgotten; but remember them, to repent of them, and to renounce them: And when one knot (to say so) of your engagement looseth, cast another faster; or, if a knot were weak, strengthen it, or cast a new one; for, as acts of faith must be renewed, so must acts of engaging to God.

5thly, Be much in the exercise of repentance for your bygone folly: "My sin (saith David, Psal. li.) is ever before me." Think not repentance to be the work of a day or two; look back and reflect on your old sins of *tippling, swearing, enmity at godliness, &c.* For, if ye wear out of the exercise of repentance, ye will wear in, piece and piece, on your old sins; against which repentance is a notable bar: Being much in the exercise of repentance, keeps the heart sober and watchful, and loth to hazard on sin, and withal makes sin bitter; but the Antinomian way takes off all restraints, and looseth the reins to sin: It is much now to see a penitent; I wish there may be much repentance in secret; but, for any thing that is seen, 'tis very rare.

6thly, In an especial manner, be much in improving the strength of Jesus Christ, to prevent your "turning again to folly." Do not undertake nor engage in your own strength, but believiegly lay all the weight and stress on your Surety; put his name in the band, which he gave to God, for the debt of duty: "Abide in me, and I in you, so ye shall bring forth much fruit; for without me ye can do nothing:" saith our Lord to his disciples, John xv. But how many fail and come short here, while they go about duties, and either quite misken or make but very little use of Christ? Many know very little or nothing at all, what it is to make use of Christ, in order to their making of their peace with God: but O how very few know what it is to make use of his strength to enable them for duty, and to "go through the wilderness leaning on their Beloved!"

7thly, Defer not to make your resolutions and engagements practicable; there are many, alas! who think shame, it should be said, that a sermon had so much weight with them, as to make them alter and change their course at once: It may be, they will consent to be religious,

but they must be allowed to come to it by degrees, and to creep toward it piece-mail; but beware of that, lest it prove in the issue to be a shift of thy deceitful heart: Ponder these words well, Eccl. v. "Defer not to pay what thou hast vowed, for the Lord hath no pleasure in fools:" and, in the Holy Ghost's account, he is a fool that deferreth and putteth off one moment. O! delays are in a special manner dangerous here, and Satan will not fail to knit one delay to another. 8thly, Reject all temptations to sin and turning again to folly, with abhorrence; say, with Ephraim, "What have I any more to do with idols?" Never think on them, but with indignation and holy disdain; for ye are undone, if ye but once listen to them. 9thly, Be often examining, if ye be like and answerable to your communicating, and to your promises and engagements; many know not how it is with them, because they examine not. 10thly, Walk humbly in the sense of your weakness: Trust not to your own heart; for he that doth so, is reputed to be a fool, by the Holy Ghost. 11thly, Be helping one another forward in your way to heaven: "Take heed (saith the apostle, Heb. iii. 12, 13.) that there be not in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God: But exhort one another daily, while it is called to-day, lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin." To be edifying to others, would, through God's blessing, be edifying to yourselves, and help you to be in good case; to be praying with them would stir up yourselves to more seriousness in the exercise of that duty; to be reproofing sin in them, would waken up more hatred of it in yourselves; and to be much conversant in the duties of mutual edification with them that are warm in their love to Christ, to his interests and friends, and diligent in the study of holiness, would readily through grace stir you up to seek after more love and more holiness; as he insinuates in that exhortation to the Christian Hebrews, Chap. x. 24. "Let us consider one another, to provoke unto love and good works." 12thly, and in a word, Endeavour to walk suitably to your light; your own consciences will readily tell you, that it is best to walk so, as ye may abstain from that which ye know to be sin; and to be doing and delighting in that which ye know to be

duty. There are very few (if any) duties of religion, but they are one time or another, and many of them frequently laid before you; and not a few shall, I hope, have cause of blessing God eternally, that ever this gospel-light was made to shine so clearly on them: But for such of you, as “detain the truth of God in unrighteousness,” (as the apostle says, some do, Rom. i) or make a prisoner of it, by setting a guard of corrupt affections about it; “Whom God gave up to vile affections,” and to all sorts of most abominable filthiness, because, “though they knew that such things ought not to have been done, yet they not only did, but took pleasure in them that did them:” I leave it, with all the seriousness I can win to, on you, and take instruments of witness in your consciences, that ye have had great offers, and have made fair mints, and come under, at least, seeming engagements: If ye have not done so, declare so much; but, since ye all profess that ye have engaged, and some have really engaged, “not to turn again to folly:” walk suitably to your engagements, as ye would not have your consciences condemning you, and God who is greater than your consciences to condemn you. Many, I fear, have sleeping consciences, and that will not now speak to them; but the conscience of every one will speak at length, and not keep silence. We shall now say no more, but pray that this word may be blessed of God to you.

These *Five* following SERMONS were all preached about the time of the COMMUNION; the first *Four* within a very few Days before it, as it gradually approached; the *Fifth* after it.

S E R M O N VIII.

On JEREMIAH l. 4, 5.

In those days, and in that time, saith the Lord, the children of Israel shall come, they and the children of Judah together, going and weeping: They shall go, and seek the Lord their God. They shall ask the way to Zion, with their faces thitherward, saying, Come and let us join ourselves to the Lord, in a perpetual Covenant that shall not be forgott.

THE repairing and making up of a breach betwixt God and a people, is a matter of greatest moment and concern; and, when men are serious in it, O how wotaking is it to them! Which is holden out to the life in these words, that lay forth before us very clearly the frame and carriage of a people, which formerly have dealt loosely and deceitfully in the matter of their covenant with God, when they come through his grace to be serious and in good earnest in the upmaking of it again.

As for the people spoken of here, they are Israel and Judah, the Lord's own covenanted people, who had dealt falsely and foully in the covenant, and had thereby procured sad strokes to themselves, and had divided and separated themselves from God, and one of them from another; which division and separation continued lamentably long. They are both here represented as coming home together,

seriously endeavouring to amend and make up the breach betwixt God and them, and among themselves.

As for the time that this relates to ("In those days, and in that time, saith the Lord") it looks literally, and according to the cohesion, to Babylon's destruction, and the Lord's bringing down the Babylonish monarchy by the Persian king Cyrus; in which time the people of God had some liberty to return to their own land: Yet, considering the great scope of the words, and that this liberty of the Jews is in a great part fulfilled in Christ, and that the union spoken of here is such as hath in it the gathering together of all the tribes; and withal, that the covenant which they enter into with the Lord Christ, is such as "shall never be forgotten." We must extend the words to their "ingrassing again into their own olive; when all Israel shall be saved," and they shall be grafted into their own root and stock from off which they were broken." As for the scope, 'tis partly to encourage the Jews; this being not only a promise of their return, but also (and mainly) of their repentance, and of their friendship and reconciliation with God and with one another. "In those days," they that had been far from him, and busy vexing one another, "shall come, and come together?" Their work and business, in coming, is "to seek the Lord;" and the manner of it is "going and weeping," praying and repenting: And, altho' the way be somewhat dark, and not so discernible to them; yet they go on, "asking the way to Zion with their faces thitherward:" They ask how they may come to him, worship God again aright, and perform the duties of a people inchurched to, and in covenant with him; and (as it were) from one post or town to another, they ask the way, and get direction from one day to another, and from one duty to another: And ther design in all is, Come, say they on the matter, we were once in covenant with God and with one another, but we have been unfaithful in both; now let us amend and make up the breach in both: "Let us join ourselves to the Lord in a perpetual covenant, never to be forgotten:" Let us renew our covenant with God, and let it be done firmly and surely, so as it may not be broken again. This looks and hath respect to Jer. xxxi. 31, &c. and xxxii. 39, 40. where the Lord promiseth to "make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and

with the house of Judah :” Cited by the apostle, Heb. viii. and ’tis called, Chap. xxxii. “ An everlasting Covenant :” Which is not so much to be understood of mere external covenanting, as of saving sharing in, and partaking of Christ’s righteousness for the pardon of sin; and of their engaging to God, in his own strength, to be forthcoming in the fruits of saving grace and holiness in their practice. This is, in sum, the way and course which they take; and is a short directory for what should be a people’s carriage, when they would make up the breach of a broken covenant with God.

As for the particular scope of this place, as it relateth to Israel and Judah their returning together, we shall not insist in it: Yet from these words we may see, First, That “ there is good ground for us to expect the Lord’s bringing back his scattered people the Jews, and their ingrafting again into their own Olive.” The same God that persuaded Japhet to dwell in the tents of Shem, can persuade Shem to dwell in the tents of Japhet. As they minded us Gentiles, as a little sister, and were holily solicitous what they might do for us, we ought in gratitude to mind them as the elder sister, that they may turn again to the Lord; who hath given us his faithful word for it, which cannot fail, but must be fulfilled.

SECONDLY, We see, That “ heart-melting towards God, and seriousness to make up the breach of a broken covenant betwixt a people and him, conduce natively to make the hearts of those that have been divided and set at variance from one another, in much warmth of love to unite and sweetly to join together.” ’Tis from this, that Israel and Judah “ become one stick in the Lord’s hand,” Ezek. xxxvii. This makes them as melted metal to run close together, as it were, into one lump: Tho’ it was a long continued schism, and had much bitterness attending it; yet, when their hearts are touched with a sense of sin and of a broken covenant, their former differences and animosities evanish. Softness of heart, in the sense of bygone sin, would silence many things among us, that all disputings, writings and printings will not be able to do. Pray for this to the land, as the most effectual mean and way of curing our divisions, and of uniting us in the Lord: It joins

Judah and Israel together, whose breach was much greater, and of far longer continuance than ours.

THIRDLY, We see here, That "a people's joining and running together in serious seeking of the Lord, is very commendable and lovely, and a good token and evidence to them of their turning to God, and of God's accepting of them:" Even as bitterness and division is exceeding displeasing to God, and prejudicial to themselves, and to the work of grace in them. This is an happy-like, hopeful and promising day of repentance and turning to God, that bodeeth much, unspeakably much good to a land and people.

But we come to consider the words as they do direct unto; and chalk out the way for a people returning to make up a broken covenant with God, which is the scope. And we may take it up in these Three, 1. As it respects the frame of their hearts: And O what a tender, humble, warm and mournful frame are they represented to be in! "They shall come, and go together," exciting one another, "going and weeping, with their faces towards Zion." 2. As it respects and holds forth the great design they have, and that is, to renew and make sure the covenant betwixt God and them: Tho' it was now broken, and they want not challenges for it; yet they do not say, We will never enter in it again, because we brake it the last time we made it; but, Come (say they) let us make it the more firm and stable. 3. As it respects and holds out their posture, and the way which they take in pursuing this design: There is a going and weeping, and praying to, and seeking of the Lord; in a word, they seek and endeavour to renew their covenant with God, seriously, diligently and humbly: And thus they pursue their design.

FIRST then, If we look to their frame, we will find implied in it, 1. A guilty condition. 2. A challenging and convinced condition. 3. A repenting condition; they are kindly affected with the wrongs done to God, and desire and use means to have them righted.

We shall name two or three general doctrines from this first consideration of the word, tho' in effect it will fall in with the last. The First whereof is this, "That God's covenanted people may deal foully and falsely in his covenant: For their coming to renew the covenant, supposeth that they had broken it; and 'tis also implied in their mourning

and weeping, and saying, "Come and let us join ourselves to the Lord in a perpetual covenant, never to be forgotten." This needs no further proof than the history of God's people their dealing with him; which holds out clearly and convincingly the strong propension and bent of heart that is naturally in them to backslide, and like a deceitful bow to turn aside and to prove unstedfast in his covenant.

SECONDLY, There is here implied a distance betwixt God and them, following on the breach of covenant: Their going to seek the Lord, saith, that he is a-seeking; this is very sad, yet most true, "That sin, and unfaithful dealing in God's covenant, will make a separation betwixt him and a people in covenant with him." Thus 'tis said, Isa. lix. 1. "The Lord's hand is not shortned that it cannot save, nor his ear heavy that it cannot hear; but your iniquities have separated betwixt you and your God." 'Tis very like, that many believe not this, that sin hath such influence in making separation betwixt God and sinners; but in that day, when an eternal separation shall be made betwixt God and them, it will be undeniably made known and manifest, when many of you, that now throng to the ordinances, will, if grace prevent not, meet with that sentence, (O dreadful sentence!) "Depart from me, ye workers of iniquity; I never knew you."

THIRDLY, There is here their sensibleness of both these, 1. That they had broken covenant. 2. That God had separated himself and withdrawn his presence from them for their breach of covenant. Tho' sin be very evil, and the want of God's presence very sad; yet they had this good, that they were kindly sensible of both: Whence we may observe, "That conviction of bygone wrongs done to God, and kindly resenting of his absence, are the first rises and springs of repentance and turning to God:" or, they are "the first steps of conversion." What is it, I pray, that all this business and stir among this people flows from? Here it is, First, They apprehend a quarrel betwixt God and them; and, Next, They apprehend a distance: And this puts them seriously to mind turning to God with weeping and supplications, and to renew their covenant, for recovering of God's presence: This same is the Spirit's method, John xvi. "I will (saith the Lord Christ) send the Spirit:" And the first thing he doth is this, "He convinceth

the world of sin:" So Acts ii. 37. the first thing that ever (to speak so) turned the chase in Peter's hearers was, that "they were pricked in their hearts" for sin; and this did put them to an advisement, and to cry out, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" And indeed there is a necessity of this, considering the Lord's way of administering his grace: For, so long as persons are not convinced of their sin, they are not apprehensive of a quarrel; but conviction of sin makes them apprehensive of it, and to think, that they would be obliged to any who would relieve them out of that sad condition: And, while God is absent and not missed, they sleep on; and tho' he be absent, yet they know it not, as Samson knew not that God had left him, till he went out to shake himself; But, when God's departure becometh sensible, it will make a wicked Saul to howl, and will make a gracious tender soul to take the alarm hot; as we see, Cant. iii. 5. where the Bride, missing Christ, is put to seeking; and, still missing him, her heart is kept fluttering and on wing in pursuing after his presence, till she recover and find it.

As the Use of the point, we would exhort you to let this truth sink in your hearts: There is a necessity of the conviction of these Two, 1. Of the wrongs done to God. 2. Of God's absence, ere ye can be serious in the exercise of repentance and turning to God. What is the cause that many ly still in deep security with much debt upon their score, and ly down and rise up without God's company? Even this, that they never had it, and were never troubled for the want of it; they were never convinced and made sensible of their sin. Now, this conviction is not, simply to know that we have sin, as many take it to be, who think it enough that they know that they are sinners; but 'tis such a conviction, as arrests the sinner before God, and puts him to answer for his sin: 'Tis like an officer coming with an order to put a man in prison for debt; he may go confidently and stoutly enough up and down the street, under the knowledge of his debt; but, when he is arrested for it by the officer, it affects him, and toucheth him in the quick: So is it with a soul thoroughly convinced of sin; men may know that they are sinners, but the conscience for a time may not much trouble them, and they may take on more to a long day, and shift chal-

longes and convictions; but, when the conscience awaketh, and the law arresteth them, the matter sinks deeper on them. Would you then know what is a suitable frame for fasting and communicating? We would commend this to you, even to study a thoroughness of the conviction of sin, and to be sensible of the distance that is betwixt God and you, and narrowly to observe whether he be present or absent. 'Tis very sad, and much to be lamented, that many, who are ignorant of the way of God, should be so strongly periwaded of the goodness of their condition, that there is no access for any word so much as once to bear upon them: If we should ask many of you, Whether are ye thoroughly convinced of your wrongs done to God, and sensible of the distance betwixt him and you? Ye would readily answer, That ye never wanted nor missed him; he hath been always your God, and ye have been always his people: Not from any strength of faith, but from ignorance, stupidity and carnal presumption. Yea many of you have not so much knowledge as to cover your ignorance and hypocrisy; neither can any gain the least ground of you, to make you sensible that your faith and communion with God are unsound and delusory, because they have not had a right rise from conviction of sin, and of distance from God, putting you on to repentance, and covenanting with him. But, because several persons will be ready to think and say, that they have convictions of sin; as indeed there is much ground and reason for them: I shall point at some convictions, for which there is just ground, and whereby ye may know if your convictions have been thorow and sound; most whereof, if not all of them, may be gathered from the words. 1. There is a conviction of the want of faith: The holy Spirit's first work, John xvi. 9. is to "convince the world of sin, because they believe not on him." Were ye ever convinced of your unbelief? Many will be convinced of sabbath-breaking, of cursing, swearing, lying, drunkenness, &c. to be sins, who were never convinced of the sin of their want of faith; for they always had it, as they think. And what, I pray, can such as ye do at a fast or humiliation for sin, when this is your great sin, and ye cannot by any means be brought to take with it, tho' you take with other sins;

but can come boldly to the table of the Lord as believers, and such as have no just reason to doubt of the soundness of your faith, while, in the mean time, all the faith that ye have is but rotten presumption? This is a most fearful condition: For, so long as ye think that ye have faith, ye cannot think yourselves to be lost; neither can ye cast yourselves down with a stopped mouth before God, nor is there access for any word from him to do you good. A 2d. conviction or challenge is of, or for the want of a new nature. Were ye ever convinced of this? not only of this and that and the other particular sin, but that ye were in a sinful and unrenewed state? Nicodemus, John. iii. comes to Christ, and speaks him fair; but the Lord lets him know that fair words, a great profession, and some, yea, much knowledge, will not do the turn; he must necessarily have somewhat else, even a new nature; he must 'be born again, else he cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven.' He is very unwilling and loth to digest that doctrine; but the Lord tells him, that, "That which is born of the flesh, is flesh." It were good that many of you had that word from your heart in your mouth, which is, Jer. xxxi. 18. "Turn thou me, and I shall be turned." Convictions of a natural state, alas! are very rare; if any of you have had such convictions, try what became of them, and what followed on them. A 3d. conviction or challenge is of, or for former breaches of covenant, for gospel-sins, and the sin of dealing unfaithfully in God's covenant; And, can any of you shift this challenge, considering what ye were tyed to in baptism, and by other vows and engagements which ye have come under since that time, especially at the Lord's Supper? how few of those have been kept? or rather, have they not been as so many ropes of sand? And, who are suitably challenged for, and convinced of such breaches, as it is implied here, that these people are? A 4th. conviction is, of the want of God's presence, insinuated in their 'going to seek the Lord,' which imports an absence of God, and that sinfully procured by them, for which they weep and are kindly affected. The absence of God, simply considered is no ground of challenge, it being an act of sovereignty; but absence, procured thro' our sin, is a great ground of challenge. Alas! the most part know not, neither are acquainted with any such

challenge; they think God is always with them, however the Lord is absent: And it would well become us to search out diligently that which hath procured his absence; for, whatever may be God's end in it, there is abundant ground of just challenge that we may get against ourselves in it. A 5th. ground of challenge is, in respect of their own stupidity and ignorance, which have incapacitated them to take up the way how to come to God for making up the breach; therefore they 'ask the way to Zion.' And this may be another sad challenge to many, who, thro' their ignorance, senselessness and stupidity, have utterly indisposed and unfitted themselves to make their peace with God, and are without knowledge of the way how to vent their desires to him. A 6th. challenge implied is, the want of love to one another; and a challenge for seen distance betwixt God and them, helps to bear in on them this challenge for distance betwixt one another: Therefore, now they say, "Come and let us join ourselves." This is another challenge, which we should not shift; it is too evident, whatever our professions be, that we are much cooled and fallen behind in our love to one another. A 7th. challenge is, lying long under a seen-evil condition, without being suitably affected with it; therefore these people go now with the more tenderness about the work of turning to God, and of their renewing covenant with him, that they were so long a falling to it: I suppose, many of you who never knew what repentance was, and others also who have been more serious than now they are, may have this challenge. It is no strange nor uncouth thing that is called for from us, to fit and prepare us for fasts and communions; it is even seriousness in these most plain, common and obvious things: And if ye can hold up your faces, and say, that these concern you not, nor the present occasion, ye may wave and lay them aside; but, if they be such things as your consciences convince you of, it is most necessary that ye take time to think upon them and lay them to heart, and that ye study thro' grace to be humbled for them before the Lord.

But the observation that we intend mainly to speak a word to at this time, is this, "That there is no amending or righting of an ill condition, but by making sure and fast the covenant betwixt God and us." What is the

remedy of this people's ill condition here, when they find themselves so far wrong? "Come, (say they) and let us join ourselves to the Lord in a perpetual Covenant, never to be forgotten." When I speak here of covenanting, as that on which the quieting of our consciences, and the remedy of things wrong in our condition, doth so much depend; it is not to be understood of a bare promise only to right and amend things that are wrong and amiss, but it is to be understood of a real covenanting with God, of a real and cordial accepting of the offer of Jesus Christ made to us in the gospel, whereby an union betwixt God and us thro' him as Mediator is made up: Wherein there is God's offer and promise, on the one side; and our faith, accepting of, and submitting to the terms and conditions on which the offer is made, on the other side: Whereupon there followeth a mutual closed bargain betwixt God and us; or the very bargain is thus made up: And so, whatever way we look upon and consider our condition as evil or sad, whether in respect of challenges for, and convictions of sin, and of wrongs done to God; or in respect of darkness, uncleanness and confusion; or in respect of crosses and afflictions: this is the way to win at the remedy thereof. Thus David, 2 Sam. xxiii. 5. when he is drawing near to death, and hath many challenges for things that had been wrong in his personal walk and in his house, which had brought on it much affliction and trouble: and when he finds himself very infirm, and under the want of much of that lively sense he had wont to have, he betakes himself to this, "Though (says he) my house be not so with God, yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure; and this is all my salvation, and all my desire, though he make it not to grow." And if we look on the prodigal, Luke xv. when he is under a conviction of his sin and misery, what resolves he upon as a remedy? "I will go (saith he) to my Father, and I will say, Father, I have sinned," &c. The first thing he betakes himself to, and resolves upon, is, to catch hold of the covenant-relation betwixt his Father and him. And there is a necessity of this, on a Threefold account: 1. Because there can be no solid ground for extricating and bringing one out of an evil condition, but by covenanting with God; for what else, I pray, can silence a challenge,

or quiet and calm the conscience in respect of guilt, when it saith to the person, Thou hast sinned, and art liable to the curse? There is no way to get sin and the curse removed, but by fleeing to Jesus Christ, and closing with God's offer of pardon upon the account of his satisfaction rested on by faith: Therefore is faith compared to a "shield, whereby we may quench the fiery darts of the devil" 'Tis true, saith the soul accused of enmity against and wrongs done to God, I was an enemy to him, and greatly wronged him; I was liable to his curse and wrath for sin: But he offered me pardon and reconciliation thro' the Mediator, and I have accepted of his offer, and do rest upon Christ's satisfaction for pardon; therefore I am justified, and shall not come into condemnation. 2. Because there can be no peace to the soul, till there be some thorow evidence that the covenant is fixed and made sure; for this is the way that God hath laid down for making peace: As the quarrel and curse are founded on the breach of one covenant, so our peace riseth upon our engaging with God in another covenant; hence are all those promises, Jer. xxx. 31; 32, 33. and Heb. viii. which are so often repeated, "I will pardon their iniquities, I will remember their sins no more," &c. all which promises being privileges of a covenanting with God, whoever would look for the performance of the promises, there is a necessity of their being in covenant with him, ere they can expect the performance of them, and attain to peace. 3. Because all that are without the covenant of grace are under the curse, being liable to the breach of the first covenant: Therefore, Eph. ii. these two are put together, "Strangers from the covenant of promise; and having no hope, being without God and Christ in the world." And so, to be without the covenant, is to be without hope, and without God, and without Christ.

USE 1. Lay this for an unquestionable ground, that, if ever ye be well, it must be by this covenant with God. Is there any conviction of sin, of violating bygone engagements to God, and of wrongs done to him? Take it for a certain truth, that things must be thus adjusted, and thus secured betwixt God and you; that ye must have pardon and peace, by entring into, and making sure the new covenant with God on the grounds of his own grace: That

is, when God is treating with you, and declaring that he is content to close with you, on condition that ye will take with your sin, renounce your own righteousness, and submit to Christ's, and be content to live to him all the days of your life that are behind; step to, and close with him on his own terms: For the heart's yielding it's consent to God, is the making of the covenant; and that entitleth to all the good that is in the Bible. In sum, 'tis this, If ye (saith the Lord) accept of my offering myself to be your God, and consent to give up yourselves to me, if ye will quit your own righteousness and embrace Christ's, I will pardon your sin, I will be furthcoming to you for happiness, and will sanctify you and make you fit to be partakers of it: And your making of the covenant sure, is your yielding to be happy on these terms, even to be content to take justification and pardon of sin freely, by virtue of Christ's satisfaction; and to give up yourselves to be his, to be for him, and to live to him and not to yourselves. As ye get God engaged to be yours, so ye engage and subscribe to be God's, and to walk suitably, according to your engagement, in his strength: To 'be for him, and for no other,' as the word is, Hos. iii. or as it is, Isa. xlv. 3. "One shall say, I am the Lord's; and another shall call himself by the name of Jacob; and another shall subscribe with his hand unto the Lord, and surname himself by the name of Israel." He shall, as it were, write down his name, 'I am God's.' This, in short, is covenanting with God; which may be done in hearing the word, in praying, in meditating, and in communicating; when faith is distinctly at least really and truly, exercised on God's offer and promise; and when, upon deliberation, there is a sincere resolving with the person's self, I will take God as he offers himself to me, and will give up and away myself to him; and when, according to this resolution, there is actually a yielding to God.

Usg 2. Seeing this is the only way to right and unravel an evil and ravelled condition, let me exhort you to pitch on this as your great work, and to aim at it as your great scope, these days that are before you, that a good understanding may be begotten betwixt God and you, and all quarrels removed and taken away, by declaring and acknowledging your iniquities before him, and by covenant-

ing with him on his own terms: This would make much kindly heart-melting, and would make the communion to be cheering and refreshful, when, after a secretly closed bargain with God, we should come to receive his seal, and to append and put to ours: And whatever tossings and difficulties there may be to get ourselves made right here; yet we would seriously endeavour to get our hearts brought up, sincerely to say with the Psalmist, Psal. xvi. "My soul hath said unto the Lord, Thou art my Lord:" and to win at a settled deliberate yielding to God, so as there may be quietness in it for the time to come.

USE 3. There is here sad ground of expostulation with, and reproof to many. I know not what many of you are doing; most part, I suppose, are taken up about the outward ordinances, but as to the main thing of making up covenant with God, as it is holden forth in the gospel, I fear that is much neglected and miskenn'd: Yet let me say it, though ye should pray and weep all these days, without this it is impossible that ye can have peace, or win to have a good understanding betwixt God and you: Put yourselves therefore to the trial, and see if the frame of your spirits be such as holds any tolerable proportion to the frame and posture that Israel and Judah are represented to be in here: They are Going, we are sitting still; they are Weeping, our eyes are dry, and our hearts hard: the humble mournful way of religion, alas! is much gone from amongst us. Again, they are renewing the covenant; but, ah! what can we say, as to the securing of things betwixt God and us? Are not the most part as well satisfied with their state and condition, as if there were nothing wrong nor amiss in it? Alas! shall we slubber and scurf over religion, and vail ourselves from ourselves and from others, when in the mean time our hearts and consciences might, if awake, tell us that we are not in covenant with God? I know, many of you will be ready to say, ye are friends with God; but let me ask such, Did ye ever know and believe the enmity? did ye ever apprehend yourselves to be strangers to God, and without the covenant? did ye ever experimentally know any good that his word did to you, as to the bringing of you under the bond of the Covenant? hath any gracious change followed upon it? The truth is, many of

you think that ye may go to heaven without the word, and the saving effects of it on your hearts: Ye found them (as ye fancy) always inclined to love God; ye suppose that ye were always in friendship with him; which, tho' there were nothing else to prove it, is a manifest evidence that ye were never really in friendship with him. But let me ask yet further, Did ye ever know what it was, to make use of Christ's mediation, in the making up of a covenant betwixt God and you? 'Tis like, ye will say, ye prayed; but ye might have done that, tho' Christ had never come into the world, and tho' there had been no ground for your acceptance on his account. But I say again, What use made ye of his mediation and sufferings? I fear ye know little or nothing at all of this: but ye come to him, because ye imagine that he bears a good will to all sinners, and is very easy to be dealt with, and that God the Father is more inexorable and a harder Party to deal with than he; as if Jesus Christ the Son were not as just as the Father; or, as if God the Father were not as ready, thro' a Mediator, to accept of sinners, as the Son is. I would ask you yet further, Do ye think, or can ye with any just reason think, that your covenant is sure, when ye know neither what it is, nor how ye have entred into it? In the covenant, as there is an offer on God's side, so there must be a receiving on ours: Tho' I grant that oftentimes this, to serious souls, will be unclear, and it will be their burden that they have not strong enough desires to have it throw and clear; such poor souls would put their darkness, unbelief and undexterousness in Christ's hand to be helped. But 'tis a sad matter, that, when we should be praying you to close with Christ in the covenant, it must be our work, and the hardest piece of it, to shake many of you out of your presumption: 'Tis no pleasure to us, God knoweth, to preach you out of the covenant; but your presumption layeth a necessity on us, to lance you to the quick, and to search down to the bottom of your sores; because these must be discovered and laid open, before there can be any just ground for the application of consolation: If once we could get you brought under a thorow conviction that ye have been deluding yourselves, we might yet have sweet, lively, comfortable and refreshful days: If ye were in this posture, 'Going and weeping for per-

verting your ways, with your faces towards Zion,' towards God thro' the Mediator, ye might expect God's blessing on these solemn ordinances, and that there should be a covenant made up with him "never to be forgotten." O! be serious in the business, and let not this opportunity go by you unimproved to the best and utmost advantage; and himself graciously help you herewith.

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S E R M O N IX.

Right Covenanting with God, a Business of the greatest Concern.

JEREMIAH I. 4, 5.

In those days, and in that time, saith the Lord, the children of Israel shall come, they and the children of Judah together, going and weeping: They shall go, and seek the Lord their God. They shall ask the way to Zion, with their faces thitherward, saying, Come and let us join ourselves to the Lord, in a perpetual Covenant that shall not be forgotten.

COVENANTING with GOD, if it be real, well-grounded and sure, is a business of incomparably greatest concern and advantage to sinners; but when it is otherwise, and only imagined without any solid ground, 'tis attended with the greatest disappointment and prejudice imaginable: A man in that case fancieth himself to be in a state of friendship and favour with God, while, in the mean time, he is an enemy to God, and God an enemy to him; and is there any disappointment or disadvantage in the world comparable to that? It is one great end and design of all ordinances, that strangers to God, by nature, may be engaged to him, and made to become his covenanted people; it was for this end that Christ came into the world,

and laid down his life, and shed his precious blood, even to bring sinners into a covenant of reconciliation and friendship with God: And therefore the ordinance, that is now approaching, is called "the New Covenant, or New Testament in his Blood."

The words have in them a short and sweet sum and compend of the gracious frame of a people, turning home to God, to get a broken covenant made up: Israel and Judah having deeply declined from the blessed state and condition wherein God had once graciously put them, their return and repentance is here both prophesied of, and promised; and this is the great thing which they design in their returning, even to get the knot (to say so) of the covenant betwixt God and them made fast and sure, so as they may never any more be separated from him.

We shall at this time shortly name some general observations from the words; the First whereof is this, "That there is nothing that a people, who have any convictions of their sin and of their distance from God, should more singly aim at, and seriously seek after, than to be firmly joined to the Lord in covenant, or to be in good terms with him according to his covenant:" For these come to the same amount, to be in good terms with God, to be reconciled to God, and be in covenant with God; by the one we come to the other: This we say, should be aimed at, and sought after by all that are naturally born enemies to God, "aliens and strangers to the covenant of promise, without hope, and without God in the world," Eph. ii. 12. compared with ver. 1, 2, 3. where, to be "dead in sins and trespasses," is expounded, to be 'without the covenant.' But more especially those who are touched with the sense of their sin, should have this for their aim, design and endeavour; as we see in these spoken of here, who, when they come to any sense of their sin, this is clearly their great design and work very seriously and closely pursued by them.

To clear and confirm it, take these Three words. Consider, 1. What state and condition man naturally is in; 2. What God is to man in reference to that estate: And, 3. What covenanting with God is: And we will find that there is nothing which he should more seriously design and seek after. 1st, Man is naturally an enemy to God,

and, in respect of his malicious desperate inclination, given to thwart with God, whereby God stands as an enemy to him: He is liable to the curse of God, and God is as an armed man against him, as Job speaks; and he, like an unarmed child, running on the bosses of his buckler.

3. Consider, that God is not only an enemy, but stands stated as such with his curse against sinners, according to that word, "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things written in the law to do them:" and this curse is like the flaming sword in the hand of the Cherubims, which with terror separates betwixt God and the sinner, so that there is no access for him to God; and, if he have any thoughts of God, he is troubled with them; and all the creatures are armed against him, so that he can expect nothing but enmity from every stone of the field.

4^{thly}, Consider, that covenanting with God is that whereby a man, who is naturally at enmity with God, cometh to be in friendship with him, and hath the face of every thing altered: The meditation of God is sweet to him; the creatures are in league with him; the angels become ministring spirits to him; all God's dispensations become lovely, and do work together for his good, even those that are in themselves most terrible; death and the grave become servants to him; and, being in covenant with God, he can triumph over them and all troubles and persecutions, and say that he is "more than conqueror in them all," as it is, Rom. viii. And saith the apostle to such, 1 Cor. iii. "All things are yours, whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or life, or death, things present, or things to come, are all yours, and ye are Christ's." Is it any wonder then, that a poor soul, touched with the sense of sin, be desirous and solicitous to be in covenant with God? And therefore, whether we look upon it as a duty, or as an evidence of a person truly humbled for sin, it is very desirable, and should be seriously sought after.

The Use serves to show, That the great scope, which ye should now have before you, is to have a broken covenant made up with God; it should be your main design to put this grand business to a point, that there may be no war, but a standing league betwixt God and you: And therefore whoever they be that satisfy themselves with going about the ordinances, and misken this, they certainly

mistake the mark: The great matter is not to come to the Communion, neither is it to win at somewhat of heart-softness, or to a little sense, which are good; but it is really to be in covenant with God, to be able to say on good ground, "The Lord is my God: my Beloved is mine. and I am his:" And when he saith, "Return, backsliding children;" to be in case to answer with the heart, "Behold, we come unto thee, for thou art the Lord our God." This is indeed a desirable thing; and he is an unhappy man that doth not, that will not heartily desire and seek after it.

SECONDLY, From their very great seriousness, in going and weeping, in going to seek the Lord, asking the way to Zion. and from their encouraging one another to join in covenant with the Lord, Observe, "That where there is any sincerity or begun work of grace, it shews itself in nothing sooner, than in an impulse to be at covenanting with God, and to have some clearness therein." For, only to be in covenant, and not to have the knowledge of it, cannot give that peace and comfort which a present sad exercise calleth for; therefore, say they, while they are going and weeping "Come and let us join ourselves to the Lord in a perpetual covenant, that shall not be forgotten:" So then, we say, that a sincere and gracious work of God appears in nothing sooner, than in this impulse to have the covenant of God fixed and put out of doubt; to have this at a point, is their great design here, and they are very serious in it. So, Isa. xliv. where ver. 3. there is a promise of the work of the Spirit in sanctifying; and how is this work of the Spirit proved? or wherein doth it appear. Even thus, ver. 5. "One shall say, I am the Lord's; and another shall call himself by the name of Jacob; and another shall subscribe with his hand unto the Lord, and surname himself by the name of Israel." The work of God's Spirit, when he comes to sanctify and save, is such as makes a man run and devote himself to God, with hand, heart and mouth: Ye never saw people more quickly and with better will come to the Church at the most solemn occasion than (when this work is begun, or there is any kindly exercise about it) serious souls will be ready to run with their heart to subscribe to God's covenant, when the terms of it are laid out before them. Only advert to these Two things in this observation. (1.) When I speak of entring into

covenant with God, I mean of the heart's closing with him by faith, according as he offers himself in this gospel: When he saith, Quit and renounce your own righteousness, and take mine; quit and abandon your lusts and idols, and give yourselves to me, and I will be your God, and be forthcoming to you in all things that concern your happiness here and hereafter; the heart yields, and says, Content, Lord, the offer is good, and I accept of it: And as wives were wont (as it is yet the custom) to surname themselves by their husbands, so doth the soul, upon the matter, in this covenant, subscribe, 'I am God's.' This is called a "yielding to God," or the 'giving of the hand to him,' 2 Chron. xxx. 8. and Rom. x. 3. it is called 'a submitting to the righteousness of God.' (2) When we speak of this impulse towards, or desire of covenanting with God, it is not to be understood of every raw wish, such as Balaam had, to be in heaven; but it is a seriously urging impulse, an earnest hunger and thirst, and an ardent longing to have this at a point: It is such a thirsting desire, as all the world beside will not be able to quench: it makes the soul eager in the pursuit of the thing, even to meet and close with God in the covenant: It is, in effect, that which, Matth. v. 6. is called a 'hungering and thirsting after righteousness,' because it hath in it a fixed longing with holy pain, which, Cant. v. 8. is called a being 'sick of love.' It is such a desire as makes the heart even faint and sick for the want of the thing desired, which can be satisfied with nothing else; no more than a very hungry man can be satisfied, if handfuls of gold were offered to him; it is meat he must have. In this respect (which will be the Reason of the Doctrine) Christ Jesus is called the food of the soul, and the covenant is like the pap, whereby Christ's fulness is communicated and conveyed to us: for we have no access to Christ but by the covenant: Therefore, Eph. ii. 12. these two are put together, being 'without Christ,' and being 'without the covenant;' and Isa. lxvi. 11, 12. converts are said to "suck and be satisfied with the breasts of the Church's consolation," and to be "dandled on her knees." Believers are like new-born babes, whom nothing can satisfy, or do good to, but the breasts; and the ordinances are, as it were, the breasts at which they suck, and

which are as so many pipes to convey to them spiritual nourishment: To which the apostle alludeth, 1 Pet ii. 2. when he saith, "As new-born babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby; if so be that ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious." And then follows, "To whom coming as unto a living stone," &c. Jesus Christ is the milk, and the word the papp that conveys him: And as the first thing that evidenceth life to be in a new-born babe, is hunger after the breast; so it is here, the covenant satisfies the new-born new creature.

The Use of the point serves to put you to look back, and to consider, whether ever ye have in your experience known this, wherein spiritual life shews itself, even to be holily fond (or browden, so to speak) on the papp: The regenerate soul cannot endure to be kept back from sucking the breasts of these consolations that are in the covenant. Now, 'tis very probable that many will catch at this, as a very comfortable mark of regeneration to themselves, and will be ready to say, Why, have we not this desire to be in covenant with God? and, if that will be proof of a work of grace, we want it not: And these Jews, here spoken of, before their coming to be in this blessed frame, were ready to boast that they were Abraham's children, and that they had a desire to be in covenant with God: but it will be another sort of desire and eagerness which they will have, when "the Redeemer comes out of Zion, to turn away iniquity from Jacob." But, that ye may know what this desire and impulse that we speak of is, and if indeed ye have it, consider these evidences of it: 1. That it is an ardent and vehement desire, a pressingly urgent impulse; not such as ye have had all your days, but 'tis an effect of the Spirit's out-pouring, as that parallel place with this, viz. Zech. xii. 10. clears; "I will (saith the Lord) pour upon the house of David the Spirit of grace," &c. Away with that grace, with that faith and love, which are as old as yourselves. 2. This desire and impulse hath such a vehemency with it, as puts the man to his feet, to go and pray, and to go weeping: It stirreth him then so, as he must needs go, tho' he be much in the dark, and knows not so well and distinctly whither he is going; because love to be in covenant with God, will in a manner make a fool go right to God; tho' there is

reason that he should seek after help to his infirmity. The desires of many are like the sluggard's desire, who lieth still on his bed, and his ease flays him: This desire maketh some holy stir, and rouzeth to diligence in the use of means. 3. This desire is such, as never dies out, till the person be thorow in the point of covenanting with God; and therefore, tho' he should be put as it were to dig wells in the wilderness, and to go from strength to strength, yet he will adventure on it, and hold on in his way: The apostle, Philip. iii. speaks of it as his '**ONE THING**;' and, when persons are suitably serious in this, it is their One Thing, and not a piece of work only on the by; and, if they may come to it in all their lifetime, they think (as they have reason to do) that they make a good bargain, and have gained a noble prize: Never did a man on horse-back, in a race, spur faster than they do, that by any means they may attain it. 4. The principle of desire after covenanting with God, holds them constantly in an estimation of, and sucking at it as the means of their life; as the babe cannot live without the breasts, so they cannot live without the covenant, they cannot rest but in it: I speak not now what believers are in their declinings; but, when they are in a right frame, they have no being but in this covenant; they must needs have milk flowing through the breasts of it for their nourishment. That is a cursed life, or rather death, of persons, who come to the word, and care not whether it be made lively or not; and come to the Communion, and care not whether they get by it any life and comfort or not: And a cursed faith, that keeps souls from making use of Christ; and such is the faith of many hearers of the gospel. Now, covenanting is the believer's earnest, and they are thereby made to forget their father's house, in hope to be admitted to dwell with Christ for evermore.

THIRDLY, Observe, "That a well-qualified desire of covenanting with God is a good token of conversion; or, A rightly blessed desire of being in covenant with God, is the language of persons coming home to God:" "Come, (say they) and let us join ourselves to the Lord in a perpetual covenant" The Lord sets down this as their commendation, and as an evidence of his begun gracious

work in them: They, no doubt, had words of covenanting before, but wanted this right impulse and desire, and therefore sat still: But now they are much affected, stirred, and put to their feet; it being an effect of the poured-out Spirit on them. We say, this is a good token of a begun work of grace, and of persons their coming home to God; because this impulse towards, and desire of covenanting with God, speaks out these Three. (1.) The sense of their need of him, and that they cannot live without him; and the stopping of their mouth with holy shame and confusion before God. (2.) An high estimation that they have of him, a judging that they have no happiness but in him. (3.) It speaks out faith, in their actual betaking of themselves to him for the up-making of what they want and stand in need of: There is somewhat of all these in the prodigal, who, when he came to himself, reckons thus with himself, 1. "I perish for hunger:" this points at the sense of his need. 2. "There is bread enough in my Father's house, and to spare:" which shews his believing esteem of the fulness of God for a supply of his need, and for making him, a poor miserable perishing wretch, compleatly happy. 3. His resolution is, "I will go and say, Father," &c. this holds out his actual purpose of covenanting with God, which hath always faith in it: It is the same on the matter with this, "Come and let us joia ourselves to the Lord in a perpetual covenant."

The Use of it serveth to shew what a serious or well-qualified desire after covenanting with God is, and wherein it consists: And those things that are marks of it, may also serve for directions how to go about it aright. 1st, This well-qualified or serious desire of covenanting with God, floweth from a two-fold conviction: 1. From a conviction of people's sin and breach of covenant formerly, and of their distance from God; whereof we spake somewhat the last day. We are afraid that many of you think you desire, when yet ye never knew aright your guilt in breaking covenant, nor took up aright the distance betwixt God and you: It is one sort of a desire that a whole man hath to speak with the physician, and another that a sick man hath: it is of the latter that we mean here. 2. From a conviction of the want of God's company: These here know now, tho' they be Abraham's seed, that yet they

are nevertheless naturally enemies to God and Christ, and without both; and therefore they seek him, and to make a covenant with him. There are some that pretend to be seeking God and Christ, and yet they have him, they think, always in their hearts. But speak soberly; did ye ever want or miss him? It may be, at the one word ye will say, We hope not; and at the next word, perhaps, Too often. And it is still but a guessing at the best. When the Prodigal came to himself, he saw that he had been (to speak so) in the wrong close. 2dly, This well-qualified desire hath a kindly heart-softness with it, which is a good, tho' a very rare thing. They go here weeping; and when they are a saying these words, "Come and let us join to the Lord in covenant:" their tears are trickling down. It is a good and hopeful desire, which is expressed with the tear in the eye, proceeding from a suitably affected heart: There are, alas! many of our desires that do not kindly affect, neither do they make any change; the heart remaineth dead, stiff and hard under them. 3dly, This well-qualified desire puts on to diligence, and is not like the sluggard's desire: Therefore "they go and seek the Lord;" they are eager and earnest in the matter, and are taken up with it. This desire will make the man sometimes "forget to eat his bread" and it may be to "pray seven times a-day;" (what if I had said twice seven times?) and very oft to withdraw from all company, at least, that is not edifying and profitable, and to retire to the fields, or to the chamber, quietly to lay, as it were, a chase by the pursuit of faith to the finding out of God's company: It will make him and her go to the poorest body in all the town or village, that is gracious, to 'ask the way to Zion;' this is also a very rare thing. Ye all know the way to heaven, as ye think, and this makes you foolishly confident, till ye run yourselves into the mire and into the pit at last, if grace, by making a saving change, prevent not. — 4thly, This well-qualified desire is a humbling desire: There's no pleading here with God, of the privilege of their relation they have to Abraham, and to the covenant made with him; they cannot find in their hearts, nor have they confidence, to do that: They judge themselves to be very un-like him, and they carry humbly towards one another,

glad to ask the way at, and to get some knowledge of it from one another, how they may win forward; they are like the Spouse, who saith to the daughters of Jerusalem, Cant. v. "If ye see my Beloved, tell him that I am sick of love:" Take my commendations (as if she had said) to him, and lay out my case before him. Such serious and humble souls will be glad to take help in the way from any body that can give it; which saith, that they are diligent and painful. 5thly, This desire, as it may, is always setting forward; 'they are going and asking the way:' and tho' they have a strong tide (as it were) against them, yet the wind of their own desire and impulse steereth them through, and maketh them stem the port; and tho' they make but slow progress, yet it is always towards Zion. 6thly, This desire is a peremptory and (to say so) an illimited desire, and that in a twofold respect; 1. In respect of coming at God: It must have him, and will not submit to the want of him; communion with him it must have. 2. In this respect, that it maketh no condition with God of its own, but is heartily well content to take him on his own terms: This indeed is a notably good mark of a well-qualified desire, when a soul desires not so much to be at heaven, as to be at God; and when it is (as I just now said) content to take him on his own terms. Many will desire God and heaven, but with some such secret reservation as this, that they get leave to bruike their lusts and idols, that they may have liberty to tittle and trifle away their time, to take their fill of the world, to be in credit and reputation, and to pursue after some one thing or other in the world; or at least they must be allowed to go about the establishing of their own righteousness: But this desire is waited with the abandoning of all idols, without any allowed exception or reservation, and with the renouncing of self-righteousness also in the point of justification; and therefore 'tis called, "submitting to the righteousness of God:" It says not a word against the terms of the covenant, but holds all. These things were good to be seriously thought on, and sought after, in our approaching to the table of the Lord, to renew our covenant with him; and, where they are not in some measure, our desires will not be found to be of the right kind: It were therefore very suitable for you, to think, how ye may get your hearts

quickned and warmed with vehement and unquenchable desires after this covenanting with God, and after the water of life. O! know ye any thing of this? There are some who have found it in experience, and who can represent it better to themselves than we can express it: Ye who have had 'your hearts panting for God, for the living God,' as David saith his heart did, Psal. xlii. can tell what raw wishes were before, and that the grace of God works such desires as have another sort of edge on them, and have a holy disquieting and restless hunger for the breasts of God's covenant, and cannot rest nor be satisfied, yea, not live without them.

FOURTHLY, Observe, "That a people or person may have some sincere desires after covenanting with God, and yet have much weakness, many infirmities and fears in the accomplishing of that their design." Many poor puzzled and perplexed souls may have this honest desire, and yet not know well how to put the thing in practice; even like unto these mentioned here, who are going toward Zion to join themselves to the Lord in covenant, and yet are asking the way: They have covenanting with God in their eye as the great scope, but are ignorant in a considerable measure of the way; yet they sit not still till they get the way (as it were) described on a card to them, but they rise and make forward as they may. I nothing doubt, the truth of this doctrine is known in experience by some serious, tho' much tossed and puzzled souls, who have some honest and earnest longings after him, and after covenanting with him; who yet know not well how to win at him, or how to make this covenanting practicable: Thus the honest well-meaning daughters of Jerusalem ask the Spouse, Cant. vi. "Whither is thy Beloved gone, that we may seek him with thee?" There was a sincere desire after him, and a fixed purpose to be at him, and to decline no labour nor pains in order to coming by him; yet they know not well whither to go for finding of him: Even like honest Mary, who, John xxi. would fain have Christ, and comes to the grave to seek him, and, missing him, weeps; and, when the angel speaks to her to comfort her, that will not do it: She continues still weeping, and tells the cause; "They have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him." It was an evidence of the honesty of her

desire, that tho' she knew not where he was, yet she could not be diverted by any thing from a mournful, restless and diligent pursuit after his presence. This may proceed partly, in the 1st, place, From believers their infirmity, and their not being thorow in the knowledge of gospel-mysteries; from their ignorance of the parties and conditions of the covenant, of the nature, properties, and promises of it: If they knew how kind and condescending the Lord is, how near he brings his word, how little he will take off their hand, how solid the covenant is, how sure the Cautitioner is, and how their part of the covenant is undertaken for, as well as God's, they would not have such doubts and fears; hence, Rom. xiv. they who are weak in knowledge are said to be 'weak in faith,' because through their ignorance they have many doubts. This makes me to think, that, if many of you had sincerity and seriousness in the great concern of your salvation, ye would be much and almost inextricably puzzled, how to rid yourselves in many things you would meet with in your condition: Because of the abounding of your ignorance, ye cannot, alas! tell what repentance is, what closing with Christ in the covenant is, what Christ's offices are, and what use should be made of them: and therefore, if ye were put into any strait or dump through the sense of sin, it needed be no great wonder that ye should be in much confusion, and did not know what to do to get out of it. It were good, therefore, that ye studied the knowledge of God, and of the covenant; that, if ever God do you good, ye may have some clearness and distinctness in the way of the remedy of your evils, and of the extricating you out of your difficulties. But that which keeps many quiet, is, alas! their own presumption grown to a great height, and the devil's rocking them fast asleep in the cradle of security: It is a wonder to see so many very confident of peace with God, who yet know not how it is come at; when God touches your conscience, ye will be put to cry, "What shall we do?" because of your ignorance. 2dly, It proceeds partly from want of experience; hence, though some, it may be, have light and knowledge, yet, wanting experience of the thing, they are at a stand, and know not what to do in this or that case: Just as if a man were to go to London, and were informed of all the towns and posts in the way; yet when he comes to advance

in his journey, not having gone the way before, he is often in doubt whether he be right: So it is with many, who from literal knowledge can tell what faith and repentance is; but when their spirits are jumbled, (to speak so) confused and put through-ether, the matter looks far otherwise upon them; and they are like a man who coming to a shallow and safe foerd of a river that is mudded, yet fears to take it; because he hath not ridden it before; whereas another, that hath gone thorow it, can confidently hazard on it: And indeed it is no marvel to see much of this even amongst believers. A 3d. cause or ground whence this may proceed, is, prejudice at the way of God, and of persons at themselves. Men have naturally a sort of gospel of their own, that they cannot go by, till someway they be constrained; and, when God puts them to it, they are at a stand: As for instance, there is this prejudice in some, that they think none can go and warrantably take hold of God's covenant, till they be so and so humbled: that they cannot go with convictions or challenges, till they get some mere deep heart-work, or be in a better and more tender frame: Hence Peter saith to Christ, Luke v. very unreasonably, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord:" whereas David reasoned otherwise, and much more pertinently, Psal. xxv. when he saith, "Pardon my iniquity, for it is great." And hence the question ariseth, "What shall we do?" and, when they are bidden Believe, they object, Ah! we are sinners, and have evil and hard hearts, and are unhumbled. Look what passed betwixt Peter and his hearers, Acts ii. he layeth out before them their horrid guilt in crucifying Christ; they are pricked in their hearts, and cry, "What shall we do?" He bids them, "Repent, and be baptised:" which takes in faith: and, ver. 41. it is said, that such as were kindly touched, "gladly received the word." Now, I pray, what if they had objected, Can we, that have even now, or a very little since, had our wicked hands embued in the precious blood of Christ, believe on him? Come away. (saith he on the matter) for there is no other way to pardon and peace with God. There was much of this in the primitive times amongst the Christian Romans, Corinthians, Galatians, and Hebrews, many prejudices at, and wrong conceptions of the gospel and covenant of grace, and therefore they would have patched up a gospel

of grace and of works: they would have brought in the ceremonies of the law, and established a self-righteousness: And this in particular is one great prejudice that the devil laboureth deeply to possess the minds of wakned sinners with, even to make them think that it is presumption for them, tho' they would fain do it, to come to Christ, and by faith to close with him, unless they be so and so qualified: As long as they are secure, he makes them take their presumption for faith: but the next day, when they are wakned and exhorted to betake themselves to Christ by faith, he calls that also presumption. And indeed, as it is Satan's manner to drive sinners on extremes, so it is our way to run into extremes: That which made us call our presumption faith, is the same which make us call our faith presumption; because we lay it for a ground, that it is our honesty or good disposition, and so and so qualified frame, that must commend us to God: And therefore, while we conceive that we have that, it is the ground of our presumption; and when the conscience is wakned, and we find that we want that, we cannot believe. A 4th. cause or ground whence this, in some, may proceed, who would fain believe, is not so much their darkness and ignorance of the way, as the backwardness, frowardness, and deceit of their heart, that will not, for them, come up to it: Such are puzzled and perplexed what to do, because they cannot get it well done, and as they would; such are like a good archer that can shoot well, but hath a deceitful bow, which when he hath put his arrow on the string, and hath drawn it to the very head, starts aside, and makes him quite miss his mark; the fault and defect is not in the man's skill, but in the bow. We the rather make use of this comparison, that the holy Ghost doth so in the Scripture, resembling our heart to a 'deceitful bow, that turns aside;' so that they, who are acquainted with their own hearts, know not what to do with them, how to guide them, and bring them up unto, or hold them at any thing that is good: And tho', it may be, they could to good purpose give directions to others in such a case; yet they find their own hearts very untractable to admit of them, as if they did not suit or meet with their own case. This is indeed a very puzzling difficulty; yet to such perplexed souls there is no new direction to be given, but the renewed exercise of faith, and

to put the directions, which they know, in practice; and when one shot (to speak so) misgives, to essay another: Not to seek (as it were) a new string, but to cast a new knot on it: and, if two knots should slip, to cast a third, improving more that grace of the covenant to make them hold better: Therefore, Acts ii. when those pricked in their hearts ask, what they shall do, Peter bids them repent: they were begun to do so, and he bids them be doing and go on. Ye then that are indeed serious, and to whom your short-comings are really your souls burden, would not think it any uncouth, strange or extraordinary thing, to find desire and affection running far before your light and practice, (though ye would endeavour to have them foot-side) a Christian's desire may be a day's journey (as it were) before himself, as to his attainment: And indeed in some respect it would not be good if it were otherwise: for it is no good sign of progress in God's way, when the desire of persons go no further length than their practice, or when their practice falls nothing short of their desires: Both in that case are to be much suspected: for even eminently holy Paul sees himself to be behind, Philip. iii. when he saith, "I think not myself perfect, but one thing I do, forgetting the things that are behind, and reaching forth to those things that are before, I press towards the mark." Where he came one post in his attainment, his desire was ten, in a manner, before him. And so is it with those people here spoken of: "Come (say they) let us join ourselves to the Lord:" they find themselves to be behind, and endeavour to work themselves up, and to draw themselves and one another forward. We must now draw to a close, and shall therefore but touch the following Observations, and pass them in a word.

FIFTHLY, Observe, "That in people's covenanting with God, their desires and designs will be much sooner proposed and laid down, than they will be got accomplished and put in execution, or than they will win to satisfy themselves therein." Altho' an union be betwixt Christ and them, yet they are not satisfied, till they be somewhat clear and distinct about it: They are like the prodigal, who, being in another and strange country, saith first, "I will go," then he ariseth: and, "I will say to my Father:" before he actually speak to his Father himself,

calling him FATHER: Some real acting of faith proceeds his more distinct satisfying acting of it. There is a faith in resolving to believe, before there be a resting of faith or stayed believing: and yet it is faith that begets that same resolution: If the prodigal had not had some faith of "enough in his Father's house," and of his Father's affection, he would not have resolved to go home: and these people mentioned here would not have set their faces towards Zion, if they had not had some begun stirrings of faith.

SIXTHLY, Observe, "That it is a good token to be asking seriously the way to heaven, tho' the askers be not so clear in it:" There is some ground to think that such persons are in the way: and if they hold on, and follow the directions of the word, they may come thither. It is far better to be dissatisfied, and to ask the way: than not to ask, and yet to be satisfied with our own knowledge of the way.

SEVENTHLY, Observe, "That persons may fall very far short of their desire, and have much infirmity, and may meet with many puzzling difficulties how to accomplish what they would be at: yet, where a serious and longing desire is wakned after covenanting with God, they should go forward and follow it forth." This people are short of what they desired, and yet they go: and they know not (as it were) where to set down the next foot till they ask the way, yet they go on still asking: There is no disputing here, but forward we should go. I suppose, these here spoken of, might have had several difficulties started, and several obstructions laid in their way, yet on they go: As, 1st, this, That they were covenant-breakers: yet they, taking seriously with it, step over that, and say notwithstanding, "Come let us join ourselves to the Lord in a covenant." 2dly, They might have thought, that it was a very long journey, and that they would never be able to go thorow to the end of it: besides that, they were under the dominion of strange kings, who were Heathens: So it may be said on the matter, and is often said to serious souls, that would fain believe, Can ye believe? It will not be with you: Are ye not under the feet of many tyrannous lusts? and how will ye win free from them? Yet they resolve, and must, yea dare not but resolve to go forward: and the reason is, because they resolve to take

with their guilt, and to make use of the covenant for answering and silencing of challenges; and they resolve also, if the journey be long, to make use of the covenant for strength to make them hold on and hold out in it. The weak believer, when such doubts are started, should make use of the promises of the covenant, such as these; "Faithful is he who has called you, who also will do it," 1 Thess. v. 24. "Return, backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings, saith the Lord:" And then follows, "Behold, we come unto thee; for thou art the Lord our God," Jer. iii. 22. They yield themselves to the Lord. A 3d. difficulty is their ignorance. They might have said, We know not the way, and how can we think to come where we desire and design to be? (as some will be ready to say, We can tell some words of the catechism, but, alas! we know not what it is to believe?) Yet they sit not still for all this, but, as one remedy of their ignorance, "they ask the way to Zion with their faces thitherward." And if ye ask here, How can their faces be thitherward, when they are asking the way? and at whom do they ask the way? The Gentiles amongst whom they live know it not, and they have no other to ask at? I answer, They are hanging on God, and taking their marks and meiths of the way, as he gives them from his word; and there is a most sweet word for such, Isa. xxxv. 8. where the Lord speaking of this way, and calling it "the way of holiness," he saith, "The way-faring man, tho' a fool, shall not err therein." It is the heartsomest way that can be; O but it be safe for the way-faring sinner, for the seriously seeking soul, to have the face toward God, for making up of peace with him! Upon the one hand, the Lord hedges up such persons their way with thorns, that they shall not find their lovers; and, upon the other, he constrains them to go right forward: "He leads the blind in a way they know not, and makes darkness light before them." Are there not severals of you brought far thorow this way, and ye know not well how? He brought you to faith very insensibly, and trained you on piece and piece, and yet ye cannot tell well how; but ye know certainly that it was he that did it; and in this case, O but it be good, singly to be given up to God's leading and guiding, "who leads his flock like a Shepherd,

who gathers his lambs with his arm, and carries them in his bosom, and gently leads them that are with young!" as it is, Isa. xl. 11. The lambs would run wild and ruin themselves, if left on the hills; but they are under the good Shepherd's oversight and tutory (to speak so) who brings home the lost sheep on his shoulders, and (as it was even now said) gathers the lambs with his arm, and gently leads them that are with young: Which not only saith, that he drives not hard, lest they cast the young; but that, as the nurse leads the little child (otherwise than ladies use to be led, by a gentle touch of their hand or arm) by the arm-holes or by the tugs, when the child knows not how to go, and cannot stand on its own feet, even so leadeth he such: "I taught (saith the Lord, Hos. xi) Ephraim also to go, taking them by their arms." When a poor body hath Christ a-forming in the heart, he will gently lead such an one, and deal wonderfully tenderly with the person. Ye who come honestly to him, may confidently yield and give up yourselves to be his, and guided by him, tho' ye be both weak, and know not the way well; if ye can but cast a look to him (to speak so) or be sweetly silent before him, allowing him to be doing, and to take his own way with you; if you lay yourselves humbly in the dust, and wait what he will do to you, he will account that believing: "The Lord is good to them that wait for him, to the soul that seeks him," saith Jeremiah, Lam. iii. 25. To wait on God's leisure, is a saying much abused, but it is very good and commendable here: "It is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the Lord." Be not afraid, sincere and exercised souls; I say, be not afraid, when he is (as it were) pouring you from vessel to vessel, and putting you, for his own holy and wise ends, in some confusion, so that ye know not well what to do, or to what hand to turn you; he is wondrous tender of you in that case, and will have a special care that ye miscarry not. This is a very sweet subject, if we could speak suitably of it. Himself bless it to you.

S E R M O N X.

Heart-melting is a good Frame for Covenanting
with GOD.

On JEREMIAH 1. 4, 5.

—*Going and weeping : They shall go, and seek the Lord their God. They shall ask the way to Zion, with their faces thitherward, saying, Come and let us join ourselves to the Lord, in a perpetual Covenant that shall not be forgotten.*

IT is like, that, at the first reading of these words, ye will approve both the design that this people have of engaging themselves to God in covenant, and their endeavour to have their engagement so solid and sure, as it may not be broken any more, but may hold for ever: We take it for granted also, that ye will judge, that the disposition and frame of soul wherein they are, while about this great business, is very becoming and suitable for such as have dealt unfaithfully and foully in the covenant of God, and are from the conviction thereof stirred and put upon resolutions to engage with him of new, and to enter again into a covenant with him; we heartily wish that it were a piece of our exercise this night, before our approaching the table of the Lord the next day, to compare the frame and sett of our hearts, with what these words hold forth this people's frame and disposition to be.

We need not now speak to the scope of the words, it being so clear, and having been touched at before. There is here a people prophesied of, who are to be brought to repentance and covenanting with God in the latter days, whose spiritually good and desirable frame is described; "They shall go weeping and seeking the Lord," each of

them stirring up another, having this for their design, and the language of their hearts, "Come and let us join ourselves to the Lord, in a perpetual covenant never to be forgotten."

That which we would now speak a little to, is, Two Generals very much becoming a people who design and intend to covenant firmly with God: And seeing it is at this time, in a more especial manner, our professed design to close the bargain with him, and, in evidence thereof, are (if the Lord will) to partake of the sign and seal of the covenant, as supposing it to be indeed a closed bargain, or at least that it is seriously desired by us that it may be so; they will not be unsuitable for you to hear and make use of them.

The FIRST General then is this, "That covenanting with God, when people are in earnest in it, will be a very up-taking, exercising and weighty business." This is clear here, if ye consider how these people go about this work; they are in very good earnest: And there are several evidences of it; "they are weeping and going: they are seeking the Lord, asking the way to Zion with their faces thitherward:" and every one of them stirring up another to renew the covenant, and to cast the knot so firmly, that it may be "a perpetual covenant never to be forgotten:" and such as may never loose or be broken again. Whence the General is clear, viz. That where people mind in earnest the making up of a breach betwixt God and them (which is done by covenanting with him) it will be an exercising and up-taking business to them. Ye may consider some Scriptures for confirmation of this, which will also hold out what it is; and namely, Mat. xi 12. "The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force." The Lord is speaking there of men's making peace with God, thro' himself the Mediator, by which they are brought to heaven; and he tells, that it is a most serious business, that will abide them brangling (to speak so) and using of violence: Luke xiii 25. "Strive to enter in at the strait gate, for many will seek, and shall not be able." It is a narrow gate, and there must be thronging and thrusting to win in at it; men will be put to a sort of agony, as the word signifies. Consider also Paul's words, 1 Cor. ix. 24. "So run as ye may obtain:" insinuating, that there is a

sort of running, wherein men are not in earnest, but indifferent whether they get the prize or not; and therefore he would have them making earnest of it, and he proposeth his own practice as an example and a copy to them; "I therefore run, not as uncertainly; to fight I, not as one that beateth the air. But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection, lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a cast-away." These are the expressions of a man, who is in good earnest in this business; and his seriousness therein is proposed to you for a pattern, what way ye should run and fight. The like word we have, Phil. iii. 13. "This one thing I do, (tis an up-taking work to me) forgetting those things that are behind, and reaching forth to those things which are before, I press towards the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." And, ver. 11. "If by any means (saith he) I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead." Every word hath its own weight, to make it out, that it is to his ONE THING, that he cares not what it cost him, so be he may obtain it.

That which we would say further on this point shall be a word of application, in these Two or Three Uses: the FIRST whereof serves for Instruction. Would ye know what is required of you, as a direction to duty at this time? And would ye know if things be right in your preparation for the Communion? This may be a Mark to discern, and a direction on the matter; even to be serious, and to make it an up-taking business your ONE THING, to be about it, as such an occasion and work calls you to be. And if ye shall ask, Wherein consists this seriousness and up-taking exercise, in covenanting with God? I shall sum it up to you in these Four, which comprehend it. 1. The man is taken up, in respect of exercise in his conscience; convictions become fresh, challenges are put home, he is pricked less or more at the very heart; there is something within him that gives him a conscience-alarm, that puts in his hand a libel, and assures him of an appearance before God's tribunal: And indeed, unless something of this be, men will not be in earnest; and it is clearly implied in the Text: For there are here sharp challenges, that make this people weep, as that extort tears from their eyes. 2. There is a seriousness in respect of the work that it hath on people's hearts and

affections: There will be a kindling of desires to have covenanting with God at a point, with a holy fear lest they miscarry in the doing of it; and these put together do much take up the man, and make him seek after thorow acquaintance with his own spirit, which he finds to be so fickle, inconstant and backsliding; and thus, apprehending the work to be great and difficult, he is put in holy fear and jealousy over himself, lest he marr the matter, and make it worse with himself, as it is said of godly sorrow, 2 Cor. vii. 11. "What carefulness, what fear, what indignation, what vehement desire, what zeal, what revenge it wrought in them." Now when these are tumbling (to speak so) thorow-ether in the man, and he hath an inward wrestling to have the work secured, and is afraid lest it miscarry; is it possible, but he will be serious and much taken up? And this is also implied in the words, "Come (say they) and let us join to the Lord in a perpetual covenant:" There is a desire to have the covenant at a point, and they fear it slip, while they are casting the knot; therefore they say, Let it be "a perpetual covenant never to be forgotten" 'Tis good to fear in the very time. 3 This seriousness is in respect of people's duty: It makes them pray, that never prayed before to purpose; it makes them examine themselves, meditate, read and confer, that never knew before what it was to be taken up with those duties: Therefore we find this people going and seeking the Lord, and exciting one another; they are put to their feet, and to reaching forward, so that they leave nothing undone, whereby they may attain the end. 4 This seriousness appears in the manner of their going about duties: There is another edge than was wont to be on their prayers, self-judging, and wrestling with God; they are much like to Jacob, they will not let the Lord go till he bless them; they will still wrestle, tho' it should be all the night; they cannot find in their heart to part with him on any terms: And (as the word is, Isa. lxiv) they shall "stir up themselves to take hold of him:" They are not only Going, but Weeping; they are not for the fashion in the work, they seek the Lord, and stir up one another to do so. May we then ask you, Are ye thus in earnest making for the Communion? May (for this is not all) are ye thus in earnest about covenanting with God? which must preceed and go before,

If things be right? It were good preparation, to have our very hearts moving and fluttering (as it were) within us to be at this.

The Second Use serveth for Expostulation with many that pretend a desire and design of covenanting with God, and that they would be at heaven, but yet were never in good earnest to have things at a point betwixt God and them, and to make sure a covenant-interest in him. The most part are, alas! taken up with poor, low and insignificant things, with unnecessary things comparatively: If they be sick, they will be in earnest about the means of their health; if they suffer any loss in their estate, they will be serious to have it made up; if their credit be impaired, they will be much concerned to have it repaired; they are carried forth with a sort of bentness towards those things: But, ah! where is there a man or woman, amongst many with their faces towards Zion in a serious manner, and with a resolute purpose, that peace with God, holiness and heaven they must have? Here is the great stop and stand: And is it possible, think ye, that ye can have peace in your going about duty, while ye are not serious, nor strive to win in at the strait gate, when ye exercise not yourselves to godliness, when ye never (to speak so) cast your coat, nor strip yourselves naked, as it were (as the word, 1 Tim. iv. 7. signifies) for that great work; when ye do not run and wrestle, as those who mind to obtain, but are intangled in the things of the world, and languish with laziness in every thing that is spiritually and truly good? How few are there under much exercise about the care of their souls, afraid lest they miss the mark and prize: with jealousy over themselves, lest they mistake the way to heaven? How few are there, who have it for their **ONE THING**, to be firmly joined to the Lord in a perpetual covenant? 'Tis my fear, that, amongst all the great number that are here, there be but very few to be found who are in earnest in this great business. I shall hint at a few sorts, that are not in earnest. 1st, Such who are very serious to be at the external ordinance of the Communion, and who will, it may be, take it ill if they be kept back from it, who yet never troubled themselves, nor were seriously taken up with covenanting with God, and with the study of holiness in all manner of

conversation, or how to come by the enjoyment of his special and gracious presence; they can be year and day, nay many years, without it, and never miss it. nor be troubled with the want of it: 'Alas! it is not seriousness to be at the Communion, without this, which will profit you; and even ye that are not admitted to the Communion, are called to this. A 2d. sort are such as are indifferent in all religious concerns; they care not for the Communion, and would not be very desirous of it, if it were not a shame to them, and some reflection on them, to be debarred from it; they think, that whatever in religion goeth beyond their job, is but preciseness, niceness, vanity, conceit and fancy; such never knew what it was to be troubled with doubting or tentations about their souls state, or the truth and reality of their grace, nor what it was to be under any exercise of conscience on the account of much sin and guilt; nay, they are glad and can boast themselves that they were never under any such serious exercise. A 3d. sort is of such, who are very civil in their carriage, but they have no more; and, if heaven may be had with ceremonies and fair fashions, they will be in it as soon as any; but they cannot endure to be at pains beyond their ordinary, to take hold of it, to do violence to their own negligence, to take the kingdom of heaven by force, nor in the least to amend their pace, and to be serious, come of it what may: These are a dangerous company; they have communicated many years, and were never debarred, and so think that all is well with them, and that they may sit still and be at peace. I shall only say to such, that that was not David's way, nor Paul's way, nor the way of any of the saints, nor the way that Christ commended to his hearers; and, I trow, he will not chalk out another way to you, nor take you to heaven in a way by yourselves, or in a way of your own: O be not deceived, for God will not be mocked. A 4th. sort are those, who have been ordering and dispatching their external businesses, so as they may win to the Communion without distraction by them: but they have taken little or no pains at all to put their hearts in order; little or no time in secret betwixt God and them, to examine and try, whether matters, as to their souls state and frame, be right, clear and distinct: 'Tis the alone direction that the apostle gives, 1 Cor. xi. 28. "Let a man examine

himself, and so let him eat:" that's a serious man, who puts himself to that comprehensive and up-taking exercise in earnest, who proves himself, if he be in the faith; whose heart smites him that he hath not taken as much time in secret, as he hath done in coming to a preaching. It may be, many have come four or five miles to a preparation-sermon, who yet never seriously once looked within themselves to see how matters stood betwixt God and them: O sad, lamentable, and soul-ruining neglect?

The Third Use serves for Exhortation: And let me exhort, beseech, and obtest you, to study to be in good earnest in this business: Believe it, the business of covenanting with God, so as, from this time forth, ye may have it made sure and clear that ye are God's, and that God is yours, is a thing of greatest concernment; and infinitely greater, than if kings, and such as are called protectors, were sending ambassadors to treat with you about making you great in the world. To press this a little, let me ask you, in the 1st. place, What think ye will come of it, if the covenant be not made sicker betwixt God and you? Ye will most certainly live and ly still, yea even die strangers to God, liable to his curse and wrath ready to be inflicted on you: O lay this to heart, if ye believe that God will call you all to a reckoning, and that he will say to such of you as are not in covenant with him, "Depart from me, I never knew you." Yea, suppose there were not such great ground of fear as to that, as indeed there is; Can ye promise to yourselves God's hearing any of your prayers, the performance of any promise, or the accepting of any duty off your hand as service to him, till ye be in covenant with the Lord? And think ye nothing or but little of this? 2dly, Consider the great prejudice that follows on not covenanting with God, and that will attend many in the visible Church: "Many (saith the Lord, Luke xiii) will seek to enter, who shall not be able." The solid faith of this would make many congregations to tremble; for 'tis not only many prophane persons, but many of them that countenance ordinances, yea many of them that have preached and prayed to the edification of others, and many of them who have heard Christ preach in their streets, and who have countenanced faithful ministers, and furthered the work of God, and who have had indignation at others

that did not so, who "will not be able to enter." This word, with that other which we have, Psal. lxxviii. 34. where there is such a seeming seriousness, and personating of many graces of the Spirit, and yet nevertheless it is but "a flattering of God with the mouth, and a lying to him with the tongue," (which is a very rife and common thing amongst professors, amongst such as profess covenanting with God) should put us in fear. And, 3dly, Consider this, that ye have naturally such hearts as others have, that are ready to beguile you, and to backslide and slip out from God: and are not these beguiles and disappointments of others written for our warning and advertisement? And if any of you should say, We hope there is no such ground of fear as to us, that's but a bewraying of your ignorance and sensibleness; for those who are best acquainted with their own hearts, will tell you that it is a ticklish and difficult business to deal truly and thoroughly with God: Do ye not know, that many take a counterfeit for grace? And were you not hearing lately, that many hypocrites have personated almost (if there be need to say, almost) every grace? Surely many of you will find it true one day, that "the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked;" and that ye have erred and played the fool egregiously, and in nothing more than in trusting your own hearts: For, saith the wise man, "He that trusts his own heart is a fool." 4thly, Consider, that it is now come to a nick and pinch with you, that either ye must close the covenant with God, or put yourselves further under his curse, and eat and drink damnation to yourselves; because ye have misst God's covenant, and slighted covenanting with him, and so have come as enemies to his table, without making your friendship with him: We declare to you, that ere the morrow at this time, many of you will either have a bit or a morsel of the greatest bargain and of the greatest concernment that ever was made betwixt parties; and although ye should not eternally incapacitate yourselves for covenanting with God, which many may do, and bring themselves under such a sad sentence, that they shall never henceforth be quickned nor awakned any more; yet ye may make your bands stronger, and may make the business of your covenanting with God far more difficult to yourselves, than now it might be.

The Second general Observation is this, "That a soft, tender and melting heart is a good and suitable frame for covenanting with God." Would ye then know what is a fit frame for covenanting with God? It is even this, a heart-melting frame: "They shall go, weeping as they go;" they have much seriousness, inward stir and warmth of heart, and that makes it to melt, and (as it were) flow down before the Lord: This is according to what we have, Zech. xii. 10. "I will (saith the Lord) pour upon the house of David, and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of grace and supplications; and they shall look to him whom they have pierced, and shall mourn, and be in bitterness as one is for his first-born:" even when they are coming home, "and asking the way to Zion with their faces thitherward," and about to enter in covenant, they are mourning: Hence, Isa. xlv. 3, 4, 5. and elsewhere, even almost wherever entering into, or renewing of the covenant with God is spoken of, the out-pouring of the Spirit is spoken of also; a "pouring water on him that is thirsty, and floods on the dry ground; bringing rivers out of rocks," &c. for preparing a people for the Lord. And this will be the more clear, if we consider, that softness and melting of heart gives a man a right impression of himself, and a right impression of God and of his free grace and goodness; and it makes the man to become folding, tractable, pliant and yielding to God, and also makes way for much spiritual sense and comfort, and for God's refreshful manifesting of himself to the soul that is so pliable and tender: Thus the Lord saith, Hos. ii. 14. "I will allure her, and bring her to the wilderness, and speak comfortably to her, or to her heart," as the word is: alluring speaks pliability, and that hath God's comfortable speaking to the heart following on it.

The First Use of this point serves to give you another mark for trial, if things be right and in good case with you, for covenanting with God: And, as the upshot of all to commend such a desirable frame as this to you. Would ye know then further, what is a right frame for covenanting with God? Here it is, even to have a heart-melting within, to have a soft, tender and mournful disposition of soul. And, would ye know what this is? We think, that from the words it may be gathered to consist

in these Five or Six things that concur to it. 1. There are some pricking challenges for sin and wrongs done to God: They humbly acknowledge, take with, and are made sensible of these. 2. There is some missing and sensibleness of the want of God's presence, and of the want of communion and fellowship with him: They know not well where he is, but they are asking after him. 3. There is an ardent affection and serious desire to be at him and in covenant with him, a heart filled with love to God, whereby it is softened and made to flow down as wax by the fire is melted, and the hardest iron made soft. 4. There is a holy fear and carefulness, whereby the heart is kept from growing cold and indifferent as to this condition, and from settling and sitting down in it; such a fear and trembling as old Eli had, 1 Sam. iv. for the ark, whereby he was kept in a fright: Here is Going and Weeping, with a holy fear lest the covenant be again broken. 5. There is a self-lothing, kindly humiliation and exercise of repentance, which especially appears in this weeping; when serious looking into the person's own condition so affects the heart, as it flows, either in tears without, and in sighs and groans within, or in the latter without the former. There is a holy indifferency as to their external lot, and an absolute submissiveness to the will of God, to be dealt with and disposed upon as himself thinks fit: If so be they be admitted into a covenant with him, they are sweetly submissive to the terms, let God do with them what he will: they know it will be well, if they get once within the bond of his covenant; and that it will never be well with them, if they be without it. Tho' this be somewhat general, yet it will be found to be a near, yea, a narrow trial. If softness of heart bespeak a good frame and fit for covenanting with God; ah! where is it? The little heart-softness that is amongst us, is one of the neck-breaks of religion, and mars our growth exceedingly. What shall we say or think of our condition, when we call to remembrance the seekers of God of old, who "watered their couches with tears, and made their beds to swim;" who mingled their drink with tears, and their meat with weeping? O! what is become of that now? or, what religion is this that we have in these days, in comparison of that which they had, who were so serious and so much affected and heart-wrought

with their religion, when we are so chill-cold and frozen, when our hearts are scarce kindly warmed, much less softened and melted? It is no wonder there be much lamenting for the want of sense and life, when there is so much heart-hardness, the contrary of this heart-melting softness.

But it may be asked here, How comes it to pass, that the people of God are now so unlike that which God's people were wont to be; so little softened, contrite, and melted? I speak not of external weeping and shedding of tears; for there may be much of that, where the heart is but little softened, tho' not ordinarily: Often, when the heart is inwardly melted, external weeping in some measure follows, tho' the one of these may be, and is sometimes without the other: Neither do I speak of that softness which is peculiarly requisite for the Communion; but of that which is called for in our ordinary walk, to make us folding, yielding, and pliable to God, ready to receive any impression that he will please to stamp on us? What (I say) can be the causes of the want of this, or that we are not in it as God's people were wont to be? I answer, 1. It may be, that professors now have much more conceit of their profession, and content themselves better with the form, and with the gospel's being clearer now than it was in former days; and "God resists the proud," yea, even pride in the godly. Trembling, and such other evidences of tenderness in several of those saints mentioned in the Scripture, are not much to be found with us; we are, alas! very unlike them: A sharp word from God would have made the strongest of them to tremble; nay, the godly are several times in the Old Testament described to be "tremblers at the word:" but we, very generally, are bolstered up, in a manner, with much stout-heartedness, and self-conceit, as if we were above challenges, fears, doubtings, and puzzling cases of conscience: David, Job, Paul, and others of the saints, who had not such ground for that sort of exercise, as most of us have, may I not say, as all of us have? yet were more in it than we. Whence this comes, were worthy of our serious enquiry: 'Tis probable that pride and self-conceit have much influence upon it. 2. We fear that Christians now-a-days have much mistaken themselves to the external deckings and

adornings of religion, with neglect, in part at least, and to the prejudice of religion itself, of the soul and substance of it: The godly of old were single and plain in religion, (as Jacob is called "a plain man,") and taken up with the power of godliness; but many now are so much taken with gifts, and are so fond of them, that a covenant-interest, self-denial, mortification and the like, take them up the less. Many of you are at more labour and pain to hold up a name, than to mortify such a lust as is a self-seeking humour, or to have matters thorow and clear betwixt God and you. 3. They made more and greater account of communion with God than we do; seeking after it was a thing they were taken up with, which now, alas! is much neglected: Because we hear that our salvation doth not depend simply on intimate and familiar fellowship with God, we are the less careful and solicitous about it; whereas, if old, the want of it made them "sick of love," as the Spouse is, Cant. v. And what longing, fainting, and out crying is there for it, Psal. xlii.? It was a prison to them, to be in a palace wanting God's company. This is a main thing that softens people's hearts, even to have the Lord manifesting himself, to have the light of his countenance lifted up, and the beams of his love and good-will shining warm on us: Too much seeking of great things for ourselves, for grandeur or greatness in the world, in making godliness someway to be gain, and counting gain (as it were) to be godliness; alas! it is not much our care to have victory over the world, and that it may have little of our heart, and Christ much of it: 'Tis not the design that we drive with suitable vigour, even to be heavenly-minded, and to bruik a soft heart: "Love not the world, (saith the apostle, 1 John ii. 15.) nor the things of the world; for whoso loveth the world, the love of the Father is not in him." They so far overcame the world, that "they suffered joyfully the spoiling of their goods, knowing in themselves they had a better and an enduring substance in heaven:" as it is, Heb. x. 34. But the wicked, and men of the world, "having what heart can wish, even waters of a full cup are wrung out to them;" God's people turn in thither, and will needs essay and try the comforts of a present world, what satisfaction they can yield them, as we may see Solomon did, to his great prejudice; for the things

of the world in a great measure got the upper hand of him; and that "after the Lord had appeared to him twice." It were good; and much to be wished, that many of you did espy this evil in yourselves: The Scripture insists much in it, as that which mens hearts are mainly carried out after; and yet we can get none almost convinced of it: Men will be got convinced of gross out-breaking evils; but of this evil the most earthly-minded worms cannot be gotten convinced: Nay, even good people are hardly got convinced of it; but ye are not in the less hazard of it: And we wot well, 'tis a plague in the generation that we live in, and hath much defaced religion as to its beauty, in the face of the conversation of many; ah! how much are they, in this, conform to the world! and how lamentably little behave they like pilgrims and strangers in it, as the saints did of old!

As a Second Use of this point, We have ground here to Commend to you the study of a soul-fixing and fasting condition: As ye would not make an unsure bargain with God, endeavour to have this softness and melting of heart. This thing is that which makes a man to "sit alone, and to keep silence before God," Lam. iii. 27. and so to be in a posture of meeting and covenanting with him: Such of you as know nothing of this, and are not afraid of being hard, cold and dead at such an occasion, are in imminent hazard of losing a good bargain; and woe to security and hardness, that hath that as the fruit of it. And, in the by, we may say, that there is a woe abiding many of you, who have no serious thoughts of this frame, and especially at such a time: Therefore let me exhort you to compose yourselves, as having to do with God, and as having God's love and favour, and his hatred and wrath laid together in the balance, and as having life and death set before you; and seriously to seek after such a soft and tender frame of soul, that fits for covenanting, for renewing the covenant, and for comfortable communicating.

But some may Object and say, It is very sad, if this be peremptory, that persons who would rightly renew their covenant, and communicate, must be in a soft and melting frame. *Ans.* 'Tis useful, and 'tis needful: Nay, in some measure 'tis simply necessary. What shall we then do that want it? For Answer, I wish many were asking

the question, from serious minding, prizing and longing after the thing: For the want of softness proceeds often from this, that we do not seriously mind it; otherwise, the want of it would much affect and afflict us, and would put us to ask after it, and God would not fail to give them direction that were thus asking the way to Zion. Yet, for your help in this matter, I would say these Three Words.

1. Once take a view of your case, and labour to have a distinct look of it; what lusts are up, what challenges may be tabled, and keep a good count of them.
2. Endeavour to have faith in exercise on God's covenant and promises, and be sure that the promise is sicker that ye lay hold on, and see that ye make use of it according to the covenant; which is done, when with your souls ye take hold of it: And that is not, nor shall not be reckoned presumption, when ye bestir yourselves from the faith of God's covenant and promises, laying the weight of that which ye would be at on the promise, cleaving thereto for attaining of it; and in time, thro' God's blessing, your unsuitableness shall piece-mail wear away, and ye shall become tender: And any bit of softness and tenderness that ye win at, cherish and watch over it.
3. Make this a particular errand to God, having your eye on the covenant of promises, and on this promise in it in particular, and on other promises of this nature and to this purpose, as, concerning "taking away the stony heart, and giving a heart of flesh; of giving you a new heart; of making you to lothe yourselves for all your abominations:" apprehending, receiving and closing with Christ in the covenant, for attaining of it as a fruit of his purchase: For it is not gotten but in the covenant; and therefore 'tis remarkable that this Scripture is set down promise-wise, "They shall come, the children of Israel and the children of Judah together. Your heavenly Father, who knows that ye have need of this thing, (as it is, Matth. vi. 32.) will give his holy Spirit to them that ask him:" as it is, Luke xi. 13. And ye would credit and trust him with the performing of that promise to you: And, endeavouring to be serious in having this for your task and work, ye shall find it made good for you and to you.

S E R M O N XI.

We should stir up ourselves to Covenant
with GOD.

JEREMIAH 1. 5.

— *Come and let us join ourselves to the Lord, in a perpetual covenant that shall not be forgotten.*

IT is a most desirable design, and worthy to be driven vigorously by us all, to the prosecution whereof it would very well become us to stir up and rouse ourselves and one another, according to the laudable practice of these here mentioned, even to hasten towards a closure of the covenant of grace betwixt God and us: to have it sounding loud in our ears, and to have it as the language of our hearts whetted to an edge in pursuit of the thing, "Come, let us join ourselves to the Lord, in a perpetual covenant that shall never be forgotten." It should be the great work and business of a Communion-sabbath in a special manner, as it is our professed design this day, to close and make sure this covenant and blessed bond betwixt the Lord and us.

Having spoken somewhat formerly at several occasions to these sweet words, I shall not now trouble you either with the division or explication of them; but shall instantly propose Six or Seven Observations from them, and then speak a word to the scope, and to the application of them, in the close: And tho' it be but a short word from each of them that we have to speak, yet they will be found to be very concerning to us, and therefore we should take the more exact notice of them.

The First Observation then is, "That there is such a thing as distinct covenanting, or mutual engaging in a covenant betwixt God and a poor sinner." This is

clearly holden out in these words as their scope: It were to no purpose for them to say, "Come and let us join ourselves to the Lord in a covenant," if there were not such a thing as a covenant-union of God and sinners. The Scripture is full to this purpose, and the treaty of ordinances is kept up for this end; as we have it, Isa. lv. 1, 2, 3. "Ho, every one that thirsts, come to the waters, &c. Incline your ear, and come unto me; hear, and your souls shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David." This is the scope that the ordinances aim at. In prosecuting of this a little further, we shall, First, Explicate what covenanting is, in general. Secondly, What this covenanting with God is: 1. In respect of the Parties. 2. In respect of the terms thereof. 3. In respect of the ground on which it is founded. And, Thirdly, To the form of this covenanting.

FIRST, then, Covenanting in general may be cleared, from what covenanting among men is: Which is a mutual engaging of two parties on mutual terms: the one party offering such a thing on such terms and conditions, the other party accepting on those terms and conditions on which the offer is made: As we see in a contract of marriage; the man engageth to be the woman's, on condition that she be his; and she engageth to be his wife, as he engageth to be her husband; and each engageth to perform suitable duties to the other. And we make use of this the rather that the Scripture alludeth to it in this matter.

SECONDLY, We are to consider covenanting, as it is betwixt God and a sinner: For we are not now speaking of the covenant of works betwixt God and Adam, wherein there was made an offer and promise of life upon condition of perfect obedience; so that, if he did that which was commanded him, he should live: But we are now speaking of God's covenanting with a sinner; for that is the covenant spoken of here. It is indeed a great wonder, that ever there should have been a covenant betwixt God and a creature; but a greater wonder, that there should be a covenant betwixt him and a sinful creature: Whatever is spoken in Scripture of the covenant of grace, belongs to this covenant. 1. The Parties in this covenant are God and the sinner, God's creature, but a sinful creature; it is the LORD JEHOVAH, and we the house of Israel, and we

the house of Judah. 2dly, The Terms of the covenant are not, "Do this, and live!" Tho' the promise be the same, for 'tis life that is offered; yet it is not on the same terms: For, tho' the life be as good as that which was promised to Adam, yet the terms are far better: The substance of this covenant we have set down, Jer. xxx. 31, 32, 33. and cited Heb. viii. 10, 11, 12. unto which this same invitation doth here relate: "I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah; not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers:" but this shall be it, "I will write my law in their hearts: and I will be their God, and they shall be my people," &c. And, "Come (say they here) and let us join in it." His engagement is to be their God, and their engagement is to be his people; and the terms follow, which are, on God's part, free forgiveness of sins thro' the righteousness of Christ imputed to them, thro' whom they are accepted, as if there had never been a quarrel; and on their part, by faith to take hold of him, and of the pardon of sin, which separated betwixt him and them, thro' Jesus Christ, as he is offered to them. Therefore, Rom. x. 6. it is called "the righteousness of faith," opposed to "the righteousness of the law," spoken of before: and what saith it? It saith not, "Who shall go up to heaven?" nor "Who shall descend into the depth?" But the word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is the righteousness of faith, which we preach; That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thy heart, that God raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved." That is, If ye make suitable use of Christ for your peace with God, and give up yourselves to him to be his servants, ye shall get peace and pardon of sin here, and eternal life and salvation hereafter: These in short are the terms on which God offereth himself to sinners. 3. The Ground of this, and how it comes to pass that such a covenant is accessible, is the Mediator's interposing in a covenant of redemption with the Father concerning elect sinners; wherein he hath procured this covenant of grace betwixt God and sinners, by his performing the condition required of him in that covenant; for this covenant of grace and reconciliation is nothing else but the result of the covenant of redemption, and the execution thereof: We had never had ground to say, that there is a

way laid down for our peace with God, except there had been a covenant of redemption betwixt him and the Mediator, wherein the Mediator undertook to satisfy justice for the sins of the elect, by bearing their iniquities; and hath the promise of being "satisfied for the travail of his soul, by his seeing of a seed, and by his justifying many through faith in him:" as it is, Isa. liii. 11. This gives the rule to this covenant of grace betwixt God and sinners; and therefore these two are put together, Isa. liii. 3. "Incline your ear, come unto me; hear, and your souls shall live: and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David:" that is, the sure mercies of the Messiah, the assignation whereof, even of the purchase of redemption made by him, is by covenant made over to the believer in him: And therefore, when we speak of this covenant, it always supposeth and implieth Christ, who, Isa. xlii. 6. is called the covenant, because he is given for the ground of covenanting betwixt God and sinners; it being by him, and in him, that God and sinners meet: There being a gulf (as it were) betwixt sinners and God, he hath made himself the bridge on which sinners may come over and meet with God; and the covenant brings us to Christ: As, under the law, Christ was typed out by the Mercy-seat and the Ark, wherein the law was put, to shew the linking together of Christ and the covenant; the efficacy of the covenant flowing from Christ, and the covenant giving us a title to Christ, and making Christ accessible to us: It lays (as it were) a bridge to us to step on, and makes an open door to us to enter in by, on Christ, and by Christ to the "holy of holies through the vail, which is his flesh."

THIRDLY, As for the form of this covenanting, it is, as in other contracts, God making the offer, and the person accepting it: God's offer is in the word of the gospel, where he saith, "Come, and I will make a covenant with you;" as the apostle hath it, Rom. x. "The word is near thee, even in thy heart, and in thy mouth:" and the sum of it is, "If ye believe in Jesus Christ, ye shall be saved." The proposing whereof in the gospel, is the laying of God's offer before you; and it is as really God's offer, as if audibly he were speaking to you from heaven, as he once spake the law on mount Sinai: It being his authority, by which

ministers are sent to treat and close this covenant with you; as it is, 2 Cor. v. "We are ambassadors for Christ, as if God were beseeching you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God:" that is, Be friends with him, by entering in covenant with him: And he sheweth us the ground of it, "For he, who knew no sin, was made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." God's offer is, I am content to be thy God, and to make all that is mine forthcoming to thee for thy good, upon condition thou quit thy own righteousness, and betake thee to my Son the Mediator for righteousness and life. The sinner's covenanting is his formal and distinct, at least his real, consenting to that offer on these terms, saying with his very heart, I am content to have God to be my God, not by virtue of any thing in myself, but by virtue of Christ's satisfaction, which hath procured access to sinners for peace and reconciliation with God; and this is called "a submitting to Christ's righteousness:" So then, there is a devoting of the soul to God, a hearty consenting to give itself away to him, to be saved and sanctified, to live to him and to his honour; as it is, Isa. xlv. 5. "One shall say, I am the Lord's; and another shall call himself by the name of Jacob; and another shall subscribe with his hand unto the Lord" As if it were said, Whose are you? and the person should say, "I am God's:" for, as plainly and distinctly, at least as really and solidly, a person wrought upon by God's Spirit, gives the answer and return to God's offer in his covenant, and resigns himself to God, as if paper were laid down before him, and he should subscribe his name with his hand to be God's. There is an obligation really taken on, and a consent plainly given; the persons with the very heart subscribing the contract, which, 2 Chron. xxx. 8. is called a "yielding or giving the hand to God." He cometh with stretched-out arms in the gospel, and saith, Man or woman, who findest thyself lost, close with me in my Son Christ, and thou shalt be saved; and our consenting is, our heart's catching hold of that word, and yielding to him, as one striking hands with another with whom he hath before been at odds and variance, in sign of his being content and satisfied to be reconciled to him, and of his being so in very deed.

The Second Observation is, "That this covenanting
 " with God hath with it, or in it, a near union and con-
 " junction with the Lord. Let us (say they) join ourselves
 " to the Lord in a perpetual covenant." The word
 JOINING hath in it a special emphasis, being such as is used
 to set out the conjunction that is betwixt the husband and
 wife: "For this cause (saith the Lord) shall a man leave
 father and mother, and cleave to his wife:" and so the
 wife cleaveth to her husband: Thus the word is, Gen.
 xxix. 34. "Now shall my husband be joined to me;
 therefore she called his name Levi:" which flows from this
 root, Added or Joined. In prosecuting this point a little,
 we would speak shortly, 1. To the nature of this union.
 2. To the properties of it. 1st As to its nature, we
 would consider, that there is, 1. A legal union, wherein
 by contract and bond there is a transferring of the interest
 of one party to another, which is here; for God becomes
 the sinner's God, and the sinner becomes God's own, as
 his portion and property. Even as, in marriage the
 husband is the wife's, and the wife the husband's; and the
 relations stands, tho' they should be in several kingdoms.
 2. There is a mystical union, which is spiritual and more
 mysterious, whereby God becometh one with covenanting
 sinners, and they become one with him; God by his Spirit
 dwelling in the covenanter, and the covenanter dwelling
 by faith in God: Which floweth from the former mutually
 transferred right or legal union, and followeth on it; in
 which respect it is said, 1 Cor. vi. 17. "He that is joined
 to the Lord, is one Spirit:" he is "God's temple," and
 "God by his Spirit dwells in him." By this One Spirit,
 is meant a spiritual conjunction, union or communion;
 whereby God takes hold really of the soul by his Spirit, and
 the soul takes a real hold of God by faith: They do mutu-
 ally embrace each other, as the husband doth the wife, by
 virtue of their union. 3. This union implieth a nearness,
 a friendliness, an intimacy and familiarity, and it is opposed
 to distance and estrangement from God: The covenant,
 really entered into, is like a bond to keep the believer near
 God, glued (as it were) and straitly join'd to him; or it
 is a cementing with God, to speak so: By this covenant,
 God and sinners are made near, and knit to one another,
 and kept from ever separating; there's such a near and

strait union betwixt Christ and believers, as is betwixt the foundation or corner stone and the house, yea, as is betwixt the vine and the branches, Eph. ii. John xv.

2dly, As for the properties of this union by covenant, a few of which we shall only now touch at, not having access to enlarge, as this subject by itself would require. 1. It is with the Lord himself, not with any benefit, common gift or grace or mercy: these follow the union with himself: The covenanter becomes "one Spirit with him," as is said: and saith the apostle, Eph. v. "We are flesh of his flesh, and bone of his bone." 2. This union is in and thro' Christ, by whom it is made up: he being the temple and tabernacle, or meeting-place, wherein we meet with God. So that we are not anxiously to enquire nor curiously to dispute here, how our union with God, and with the Mediator do differ: we unite with God in him, and upon the grounds of his redemption, in which respect our union with God is more mediate. 3. This union is very friendly, most firm and indissoluble: It is a wonderful near and sure union. 'Tis an inexpressible union, and the more we must here give over speaking further to it, only looking to a word of it, John xvii. 21, 23. in the 21. verse saith our Lord. "That they all may be one, as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee: that they also may be one in us." It is such an union, by the believer's being in God and in the Mediator, as is that, whereby God and the Mediator are one; tho' no parity is here to be understood, but a resemblance only. And ver 23. "I in them, and thou in me; that they may be made perfect in one." "I in them;" here the union is most immediate: "and thou in me," there the union is most mediate, viz by God's being in the Mediator, dwelling in the believer, and the believer's dwelling in God (the fulness of the Godhead being in the Mediator) by his meeting with God thro' faith in the Mediator: And indeed, were there no more but this, it saith that this covenant is a good bargain.

The Third Observation is, "That union with the Lord" "by this covenant is accessible to a run-away sinner, that" "hath perverted his way, upon his coming aright to close" "with him therein on the terms of it." Who are these coming here to join in covenant with the Lord? It is even these spoken of, Jer. iii. 6, 7. "Backsliding children,

treacherous dealers," who are bidden "return, and he will heal their backslidings;" which could not be, if this covenant were not accessible to sinners. Nay, let me say, there is scarce any sort of sin, but the Lord out-faceth it in his covenant; as we may see, Jer. iii. where the Lord saith, "Thou hast played the harlot with many lovers; thou hast spoken and done evil as thou couldst: yet, wilt thou not from this time cry unto me, My Father?" If we look to the grossness of sin, were it like "scarlet or crimson, Isa. i. 18. it shall be made white like snow and wool: If ye be willing and obedient," saith the Lord, to close a covenant with me, "ye shall eat the good of the land." In the propounding of the covenant, he will take away that exception of the grossness of sin, which might stand in the sinner's way. were it even rotten hypocrisy, detestable indifferency and lukewarmness in the matters of God, putting the person in hazard to be spewed out of Christ's mouth; yet he saith even to such (if they will indeed take his counsel, and be content to have their deadly evils removed, and their wants supplied:) "I counsel thee to come and buy of me eye salve, gold and garments." And, "Behold I stand at the door and knock; if any man will open the door, I will come in to him, and sup with him, and he with me." Only take this word of advertisement here, and then I shall clear and confirm the doctrine further: When then we speak of sinners access to God by this covenant, we mean, that there is access, only on condition they take with their faults, and come weeping, heart-broken, and some-way suitably affected with their sin: These only are the persons that may comfortably expect this access; he seeks after such, tho' he will find none such till he make them such. For further clearing and confirming of it then, we would consider these four things. 1. God's end in the covenant, which will make out this, that there must be access to a run-away sinner by this covenant to union with God, when he comes home to him in the way of repentance and believing; because his end in the covenant is "to save sinners," often spoken of; to "justify the ungodly," Rom. iv. 5. to "dwell with rebels," Psal lxxviii 18. to "get a name and a praise to himself," of being gracious: As it cannot admit of, nor let in a sinner, but on this condition; so it cannot but accept of a sinner having this

condition. 2 We would consider God's contrivance of the covenant, in making it suitable to such an end, so as it may make the riches of his grace to shine, and may be effectual for the gaining of souls; and therefore, 2 Sam. xxiii. 5. it is said, in this respect, to be "ordered in all things and sure:" and Jer. xxxi. 33. compared with Heb. viii. the substance of it is set down compended in a few words, "I will pardon their iniquity, and remember their sin no more," &c. 3. We would consider the administration of the covenant: 'Tis not in an immediate way, as that first covenant made with Adam was, wherein there was no Mediator, neither was there need of any: but it is in a mediate way, by a Surety and Mediator, who hath taken on and engaged for the debt of the covenanting sinner, and hath undertaken for his through-bearing. Now, why is this administration and dispensation? but because the principal debtor is a bankrupt, and not able to satisfy for himself; therefore he hath access to come and get pardon and to be friends with God thro' the Mediator. 4. We would consider all the properties of the covenant, especially the freeness of it, and we will find that they speak out this: It is a covenant of "sure mercies," Isa. lv. 3. and all the promises and articles of it respect sinners, and hold forth this, that there is a way laid down, how a sinner, at feud with God, may get this union made up by covenanting with him.

The Fourth Observation is, "That covenanting with God is a very short cut for the quieting, peace, and happiness of a treacherous backsliding sinner." Therefore when these people, here spoken of, are, in their holy heat and warmth, stirred up under the conviction and sense of their guilt; as the short cut to come to peace and a happy condition, they say, "Come and let us join ourselves to the Lord in a perpetual covenant." It is the accepting of God's offer, and being content to be his on the account of Christ's righteousness, that they propose to themselves as the ground of their calm, quietness, and happiness. This Observation implies these Three things. 1. That covenanting with God doth fully make the covenanter happy, tho' formerly he hath been a miserable sinner; and O this is a good bargain, that makes a sinner compleatly happy! it makes him to say, "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there

is none upon the earth that I desire beside thee,' Psal. lxxiii. I shall name a few scriptures, to shew the full happiness of a sinner that enters in this covenant: The first whereof is, 2 Sam. xxiii. 5. "Altho' my house be not so with God, yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant, well-ordered in all things and sure; and this is all my salvation, and all my desire:" It is *MENSURA VOTI*, even all that heart can wish. And these words being considered, as "David the sweet-singer of Israel" his last words, when he is a-dying, they clearly imply a commendation of this covenant as full for the happiness of a sinner. Another passage is, Rev. xxi. 7. "He that overcometh shall inherit all things:" How is that? even thus, "I will be his God, and he shall be my son:" that is, in substance, I will declare myself to be in covenant with him. This is the compend of the compleat happiness of glorified saints in heaven, and the begun happiness of believers, of sojourning saints here on earth, in a less measure and lower degree; for in heaven God "will be all in all:" And is not this a good bargain, and good to sinners? which commends it the more. A third place is, Rom. viii. where 'tis told us, that nothing can be "laid to their charge:" but 'tis answered in this covenant. They have a Cautioner to pay their debt, and to strengthen them for their duty: "I will (saith he) be their God, and they shall be my people: I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me: I will pardon their iniquities, (all by-gones) and heal their backslidings," they shall not get leave to go from me: Would ye be pliable and yielding to God's covenant? "I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts and a new heart will I give unto them, and will cause them to walk in my statutes, and to do them."

2. The doctrine implies, as it is a full covenant, or makes the covenanter fully happy, so it makes him sickerly and surely happy: 2 Sam. xxv. 5. it is a "covenant well ordered in all things, and sure." Whoever by faith betake themselves to Christ's righteousness, and lay hold on this covenant, may expect communion with God, as certainly as Adam before the fall had it; for 'tis the same God that promiseth, who is as faithful as ever he was: Hence 'tis called "a word tried as silver in a furnace seven times;" a pure word, that cometh out of the furnace always as massy

and weighty as it went in. And the ground of the covenant being Christ's satisfaction, it makes it sure; therefore he is called a "tried Corner-stone, a sure Foundation." 3. It implies, that as it is a sure, so it is a compendious and speedy way to happiness, and of deliverance to the sinner; which maketh much for God's praise: He is a "very present help in time of trouble, or a speedy help," Psal. xli. So, Psal. xxxii 5. "I said (saith David) I would confess my transgression, and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin," immediately (as if he had said) upon my confession, without longer delay: And, Rom. iv. 7, this Psalm is made use of, to demonstrate the righteousness which is by faith in Christ.

The Fifth Observation is, "That sinners, who are lying under a quarrel with God, and have the offer of a covenant, should betake themselves to it, and without delay put a close to the bargain betwixt God and them. Come (say they here) and let us join ourselves to the Lord, in a perpetual covenant:" whereby is holden out, that, when a sinner hath access to the covenant with God, he should flee to it, and take hold of it quickly. In this respect, covenanting with God is compared to "fleeing in to the city of refuge," Heb. vi. That which I mean is, 1. That a sinner, who hath this covenant in his offer, should take no other way for justification and freedom from sin and wrath, but hold to this only, and seek to be justified by it. 2. That he should do it speedily: When the word of the gospel saith, Come; he should answer, "Lo, I come unto thee:" When God by the preaching of the gospel maketh a gracious declaration, that he will accept of lost sinners that come to him, and saith, "This is the day of salvation, this is the accepted time," as it is 2 Cor. vi. 3. and when by his ministers he waiteth on you, inviteth and wooeth you, ye should presently, without delay or demur, close with the offer, and accept of the invitation.

The Sixth Observation is, "That those who are convinced that they have sinned, and would fain be in covenant with God, should endeavour to have it throughed and made sure, to have it an absolutely closed and ended bargain." This is very clear in this people's practice, who concernedly say, "Come let us join ourselves in a perpetual covenant never to be forgotten:" they think

they cannot get it made sure enough, and therefore they join in a covenant 'never to be forgotten, to be perpetual,' they judged that it could not possibly be made too sure: Which manifestly saith, that when God giveth an opportunity to enter into, or renew a covenant with him, we should be holily solicitous, in very good earnest, and greatly concerned to have it made sicker, as the word is, Neh. ix. last verse, "We make a sure covenant and write it, and our princes, Levites and priests seal unto it." That word, Isa. xlv. 5 is remarkable to this purpose, "One shall say, I am the Lord's; and another shall call himself by the name of Jacob; and another shall subscribe with his hand unto the Lord:" that it might stand (as it were) over his head, as being formally and explicitly engaged in, with heart and hand: And they that know how fickle and inconstant their hearts are, and how prone to deal loosely and unfaithfully in God's covenant, have good reason to look to this, that all be sure work; that they get not the shell for the kernel, and go not down to the grave with a lie in their right hand.

The Seventh Observation is, "That there are some times beside other times, wherein some people beside others have it pungently put to them to enter in, and to renew their covenant with God." These here spoken of, who say, having God's pressing call to it, before they said it one to another, "Come and let us join to the Lord in a covenant," are put to it more than others, and at this time more than at another. In a word, people are then put to it in a more especial manner, 1. At such a time when the gospel is clearly, convincingly, and powerfully preached unto them; preaching of the gospel being God's way of meeting and treating with sinners, and the ministers and preachers thereof being as his ambassadors commissioned and sent forth by him to treat, and close a treaty with sinners, on the terms contained in their commission; which when they with suitable concernedness and earnestness do, their hearers are the more put to it. 2. They are thus put to it, when some stirring and warmth of affection towards covenanting with God is wrought in them; or when their own frame thro' grace, presseth them on to it; as we may see it did in this people. 3. When the Lord oftner than once or twice, in frequently renewed opportunities of this

kind, puts people to it; and more especially in the sacrament of the Lord's supper: The very sight and offer of the elements in the communion speak plainly, on the matter, to the communicants, Are ye indeed in earnest in the great business of covenanting with God, since ye are now to receive the seal of it? If ye be not, ye notably profane the ordinance, by setting a seal to a blank charter: It is therefore called the Covenant, "This is the cup of the new Covenant;" because it puts you in mind of the Covenant, and puts you to it, whether ye will really engage in it. It is like the king's appointing a day for sealing of pardons to rebels; his proclamation first puts them to it, to accept of the pardon; Next, the heralds put them to it; and then, lastly, the set and fixed time or day of the sealing, puts them most of all to it: And so it is with you in this ordinance, that we are by and by to be about.

We come now to the Application of all, wherein we shall not insist on all things that these doctrines minister ground for; but shall pitch on some most useful, and which are the great scope of the text and of the day.

And, in the 1st place, I would beseech you to endeavour to gather and compose yourselves, and gravely to ponder what it is that this day ye are pressingly called to: it is even this, "Come and let us join ourselves to the Lord, in a perpetual covenant never to be forgotten." Know and believe, that there is such a thing as covenanting with God; that God is dealing with you to covenant with him; and that it is a good bargain: "To you is this word of salvation sent." And ye should be very seriously thinking how to get it accepted and made use of, how to receive this offer by faith, and how to get yourselves given up and away to him; because in this covenant (as I shewed before) there is a mutual engaging: God offers himself, and all that is in him, to be ours, and to be made forth-coming for our good; and we by faith close with the offer, and give up ourselves to him to be at his disposal. Have ye any serious thoughts of this? Put yourselves to it, and we in the name of the Lord put you to it; for we cannot well proceed any further, till ye be at some point in this: Are ye in earnest? is this your errand in being here to-day? if not, why are ye come hither? is it to see how the day

goeth? or, is it only to get your communion, as ye use to speak? Alas! what's that? it is to covenant with God, and, ere ye depart this place, to put it to a point, that it may be a closed bargain; that should be your errand.

And therefore, in the 2d. place, we tell you, that the great God is content to covenant with poor, feckless and sinful creatures; whereat we may wonder, and say, Is it so "in very deed that God will dwell with men on earth?" will he indeed covenant with men, with sinful men, with treacherous-dealing men, with backsliders? Yea, we tell you, that it is so; he is content to be your God, and that ye possess all things in him; content to pardon you all your sins, to give you grace and glory, even every good thing; to enter you heirs to a kingdom, and on good and easy terms; to do it freely, "without money and without price," if ye be but indeed content to accept of his offer on his easy and very reasonable terms: And may not your very hearts laugh within you at the hearing of the glad tidings of this covenant, and that God is yet content to make it up with you? O how sappy and massy is this! and that is a very sweet word to this purpose which we have, Psal. xvi. 6. "God, even our own God shall bless us;" which may make the believer smile. This relation of our own maketh the blessing double; and it flows from this formal (at least, real) covenanting and union with God, and the believer hath a right to this and all things: He hath here an offer, and another sort of right, than he hath to his house and land or clothes; 'tis a right to God, that giveth a right to these things, I mean a spiritual right; for we speak not now of that which is civil: Let us, therefore, stay ourselves and wonder, and be stirred and affected with it, that the infinite and all-sufficient God is content to make this good bargain, and even now to make it with us sinners, even with insignificant and unworthy us.

3dly, We make Proclamation of this Bargain to you, and avouch, that there is salvation offered to sinners, and to be had thro' Jesus Christ: The Lord alloweth and warranteth us to make this proclamation, as well as he did Jeremiah, when he saith to him, Chap. iii. 12. "Go and proclaim these words towards the north, Return, thou backsliding Israel, and I will not cause mine anger to fall upon thee; for I am merciful, saith the Lord, and will not

keep anger for ever." He alloweth, nay, be peremptorily commandeth that ye should be put to it; and therefore, when we have laid the covenant before you, what say ye to it? what will ye do? we must have an answer from you: Ye have his word and oath for confirmation of it: O believe and take hold of it, and ye shall get the seal from us as his commissioners, who treat with you, according to our commission, in his name. And here we must be particular, and be ye particular with yourselves: Take and receive what we say to you with a warrant, as the word of the Lord; for it is no less his word now, than it was when Jeremiah and the other prophets spoke it, when the apostle spoke it, yea, when Christ spake it himself: It is the same covenant, and the same word, that this day is preached to you; the Lord calls us to stir up ourselves, and to say in good earnest, "Come let us join to him in a perpetual covenant." 1. The Party inviting is the LORD JEHOVAH in the Mediator; and sure he is a most, yea, the most excellent Party: "Thy Maker (saith he, Isa. liv. 8.) is thy Husband" 2. There are in this covenant excellent promises: God is content to be your God, and to take you for his people and spouse, to pardon your iniquity, to heal your backslidings, to sanctify and save you, and to make you eternally happy; and are not these desirable? 3. It calls you to give yourselves up to him; and indeed it is very reasonable, that, if the husband give himself to the wife, she should give herself to him. Are ye then content to treat with God in the Mediator, and to be his on his own terms? It is good to meet and treat with God in him. Have ye any ground to except against this? doth it please or displease you? say to it, tell your mind: For I declare to you, that, if ye get him to be yours, you must needs be his. I fear, many of you stand and stick at this, notwithstanding the high reasonableness of it: Is this, think ye, an evil, disadvantageous, or prejudicial exchange? Whether is it better that the one and only true God reign over you, than that Satan, and a multitude of strange lords, your lusts, taking the throne (as it were) by turns, should reign over you? It is both sad and stupendious, that ever this should be suffered once to come in question or debate; and yet, alas! it is this, or something like this, at which it will stand. Either ye will not take God for your God, or ye will not

give yourselves to him to be his people, on his own very reasonable and easy terms; and I trow, ye will make no better. I would, therefore, yet again put you to it; for it is the very thing that ye are called to, the great business of the day, and it is come even to the shock.

And therefore, labour to be at a point, whether ye will close with him or not: If ye will sincerely say, We take the Lord to be our God, and give ourselves to him, to be his people and servants; then we say to you, and assure you in his name, that this cup, that by and by ye are to drink, shall be, according to his warrant, "the new covenant in his blood." And, to press you to the thing, let me but ask you a few Questions. 1. Is there not need of covenanting with God? are there not many sins on your score? is there not a quarrel betwixt God and you? is not this bargain meet and suitable for you, which holds out remission of sins and peace with God? are ye not urgently called to it? And what ground of challenge will it be, think ye, that this was in your offer, and on very free and easy terms, and ye would not accept of it, but would needs destroy yourselves? 2. If there be sin and a quarrel, is there not a necessity to have it taken away? Have ye laid your account and resolved not to be solicitous and careful, whether ye be friends with God or not? And, if ye will not say that, why do ye not enter this covenant? 3. Is there any other way to get sin pardoned, and the quarrel taken away, but by making sure your covenant with God? David or any others that were saved, were they saved any other way? This covenant was "all his salvation, and all his desire." 4. What will ye say in the day of the Lord, when the trumpet shall sound, and he shall call you to an account for refusing his free and gracious offer; when there will be no more treating with you; when he shall say, and make your own conscience say to you, It was plainly told you, that there was a quarrel standing betwixt me and you; it was told you, that I was willing to enter into a covenant with you, and to remove that quarrel; I sent my messengers unto you for this end, but ye made light of the matter? Say to it, O say to it: ye must say something, Yea, or Nay; ye are not left to be indifferent, and to keep up yourselves in this matter: I tell you, if ye say not Yea, ye say Nay; and, as

the apostle speaks, Acts xiii 46. ye pass sentence on yourselves, "and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life:" It is interpretatively a saying, that ye will not have heaven and life thro' Christ; and therefore, as ye would not destroy your own souls, I beseech you, nay, I obtest you in the name of the Lord, and for his sake, accept of this covenant. We tell you, and, as the apostle hath it, we say, "Be it known unto you, that through Jesus Christ remission of sins is preached to you:" he hath purchased life and salvation to sinners; and, "To you is the word of this salvation sent:" Give, O give your consent to the bargain, and that is all we seek of you.

Now, to prosecute this a little, and to put you yet further to it, because it will ly before God, whether we have put you to it or not, and whether ye have accepted of this covenant, or not; whether we were in earnest in proposing it, and whether ye were in earnest in closing with it: Consider, 1. The persons whom we put to this, and the things that we put you to: 2. The terms on which: 3. The grounds from which: And, 4. The qualifications and directions whereby.

FIRST, As for the persons whom we put and press to this covenanting with God: It is not those only who have gotten their tokens warranting them to come to the table, nor those only that are debarred, and so have got no tokens; but it is all of you, "those who are afar off, and near-hand;" but differently: To the tender soul we say, Come forward: To the secure we say, Humble yourselves, and then come and join in this covenant. The thing we call you to, is, to take the Lord to be your God, and to give up yourselves to be God's; we call you to take God to be your Master, your Father, your Saviour, your Head, your Husband, your Friend, even your All: And that is no ill nor small offer: And we call you to give up yourselves to God, to forsake your father's house, and all your kindred, and to cleave to him; to "join yourselves to the Lord," as the text hath it; and as it is said, the prodigal "joined himself to a certain citizen," so ye would join yourselves to the Lord, and be beholden to him for your life.

SECONDLY As for the terms, they are in short, That seeing God saith, Accept of my Son's righteousness, and ye shall be my sons and daughters; ye would freely accept

of it, and take and put Christ's righteousness in the place and room of self-righteousness which was in the covenant of works: found your plea before God on nothing that ye can do, but on Christ's doing and suffering for you; which now by faith ye resolve to adhere to: and resign yourselves to him without any reservation, to be guided and saved by him in his own way.

As for the THIRD, How or from and by what grounds we put you to this? or rather, How doth the Lord put us all to it? 1. Ye are put to it by his offer in the gospel, which, in discretion, calls you to give him an answer: He cries, "Come unto me, and I will make an everlasting covenant with you even the sure mercies of David:" and, doth he not require an answer? and, is it not incumbent to us, who speak to you in his name, to crave your answer? We declare to you all, that ye may, if ye will, come to be joined with God in covenant, and may be sure to be accepted of as his if ye come aright. Now, what say ye to it? Either ye must look on this as a cheat or cunningly-devised fable; or, if ye dare not look on it so, ye must accept of it, and make it welcome. 2. Ye are put to it, in this respect, that the Lord brings you now and then under some conviction of the necessity of your peace with God: something within you saith, that peace with God is worth the having, and needful: that this is a good bargain, and that ye have need of it: and there are now and then some raw resolutions to put it to a point: And it may be there is something presently that puts you to it: and if not so much the more ye would put yourselves to it, lest "the kingdom of God be taken from you." 3. Ye are put to it by this same sacrament: Is it possible that ye can take the communion for a seal and confirmation, except ye covenant with God before? If ye will not covenant, ye prove yourselves to be treacherous dissemblers in going to the communion, and to be liars to God: When he presents and offers his covenant, ye profess to take his offer, and to close the covenant with him: but ye refuse, as it were, to take the pen in your hand, or do throw it away: When he presents to you the cup of the New Testament, ye drink the wine, and spill the blood, and so become 'guilty of the body and blood of the Lord,' when ye despise it, and will not make use of it, nor cove-

nant with God that ye may get the use of it. And therefore, 4. Know, that ye are put to it presently and peremptorily, and that the Lord will take it for a refusal and for a scorning and despising on your part, if ye do it not; and do ye think it a little matter to have such a guilt lying on your score? What know ye, if ever God shall offer to seal a covenant with you again? And therefore we put you to it peremptorily, as to these Three. (1) As to the thing, that, when he invites, you come; when he offers, ye receive and give the Lord your answer, not a Nay-say, but a Yea, as ye will be answerable: And, upon your saying Yea to this covenant on his terms, we declare in his name, that he says Yea, in taking in the sinner that fleeth unto him. (2) As to the whole of the thing: For ye must not halve God's covenant; but as ye accept of God to be yours, so ye must give up yourselves to him to be his; and as ye take Christ for paying of your debt, so also ye must take him to help you to do your duty: Take all therefore, and submit yourselves intirely to him in this covenant. (3.) As to the time, ye must do all this presently: For the Lord doth not allow us to give you an hour, or to promise to treat with you one hour after this; 'tis now, "Come and let us join ourselves to the Lord." 'Tis no difficult thing that ye are called to; 'tis "to believe with the heart, and to confess with the mouth our Lord Jesus Christ," as it is, Rom. x. 9. The Object is Christ; the condition is faith, whereby he is gripped and taken hold of, and which goeth out towards him in the word: And so ye have no more ado, but, when the offer and promise comes out, to accept and subscribe, and to say, "I am the Lord's, I will be his, to be saved by his righteousness, and made holy by his grace," both which are contained in the covenant; I am content to be beholden to him both for holiness and happiness; and it shall be a bargain. The Lord himself perswade you to do so, and that presently, without delaying dallying, or shifting and off-putting.

Now, it may be, that some think this to be a good bargain, but they know not how to make it sure and sicker, so as it may hold for ever. And therefore this is the last thing, that, in the FOURTH place, we would speak a little to, viz. How shall a person covenant with God, and know that he hath done so in very deed? (for the Directions how

to covenant are so many evidences of covenanting, when performed.) For Directions then in this matter: We would in general, in the 1st. place, have ground to suppose and take it for granted that ye know what ye are, even sinners, and that sin hath laid the foundation of a quarrel betwixt God and you; and that ye know what he is a designing and doing by this preached gospel, even to bring sinners into this covenant, and to have an union made up betwixt him and them. But ye will, belike, say, I know not how to make it sure. There is no answer to this, but, Be doing, till ye get it made sure; for your unshureness must flow, either from something on God's side, or from something on your side: Ye dare not, I suppose, say that it flows from any thing on God's side, or, if ye should, this is the way to make him sure (to speak so;) and, if it flow from something on your side, he bids you, "Return, backsliding children, and he will heal your backslidings," and make it sure. But, in the Next place, and more particularly, consider, 1. Your end and design, what ye would be at. Ye may have some general aim at something that is good in itself; but that is not enough, it must be something more particular and peculiar: Is it to get God to be your God? doth that fill your eye? Is it to get your backslidings healed as well as pardoned? That is right, if your aim be to have God and spiritual good. I mention this the rather, because some may love God and the covenant, for some temporal good; whereas others love him and his covenant mainly for a spiritual good, and think themselves well come to and made up thereby. Wherein lies the difference? will ye say. I Answer, in a word, To love God and the covenant only or mainly for temporal mercies, is ill and selfish; but to love God and his covenant, to be made thereby really happy in the enjoyment of him, and to be made conform to him in holiness, is good and desirable, and neither selfish nor servile and mercenary: As it is no unkindly-like token in a wife to love her husband, to be delighted in him, and to like well to enjoy his company; so it is a kindly-like mark for a soul to love God, on the account of the happiness and holiness that are to be had in him, and from him: Love to God shoulders not out all regard and love to ourselves simply, but it shoulders out love to lusts, and all inordinate love to self and to every

idol; nay, 'tis inconsistent with true love to God, not to care whether we be happy in the enjoyment of him or not.

2. Consider how, and by what means, and on what terms ye seek to come at that end: Are ye secure, and senseless of your sin and misery without God? 'Tis very like, that ye make but a blind bargain, whereof ye will have no real advantage: But, have ye any kindly touch of your sin and misery, and of your need of a Saviour; and have ye recourse to him, as One "able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God through him, and who lives for ever to make intercession for them?" Ye may know somewhat of your sincerity in covenanting with God by the way that ye come to him.

3. What use make ye of the Mediator, when ye are come to him? Is your peace with God, and your hope of holding by the bargain, grounded on him? Do ye lay the weight of all the good ye expect, on his mediation, on his satisfaction and intercession, on his purchase? Do ye hold all thorow him? That's a good token.

4. Are ye content to give to God, as well as to take from him; to devote yourselves to him for service, as well as to enjoy him and happiness in him? This also is a good token, as well as a direction.

5. Are ye in much holy fear and jealousy of backsliding? and is it in your eye and aim purposely to article this with the Lord, "to put his fear in your heart, that ye may not depart from him?" Many persons will sometimes in a warm fit, or in a good mood (as we use to speak) come far on, as Agrippa did, but quickly fall off, and return to their wonted biases, coldness and indifferency; therefore, in your covenanting with God, there would be much holy fear, lest it be not sound, lest it hold not: Let your soul say, Now I am absolutely and unreservedly given away to God, not by mortgage or wadset only (to speak so) but without reversion, even for ever.

6. Ye would come to close actually with God himself in covenant: Many come to the word and sacrament, to get, as they think, some good; but come not to the covenant, to be really and perpetually joined to the Lord himself.

7. Ye would seek after some heart-warming, by God's Spirit within you, and some lively exercise of your faith in him, as ye see to be in this people's case.

8. Persons that are in earnest will be much affected

with bygone slips, failings and unfaithful dealings with God, and are afraid of falling back, and of dealing loosely with the Lord; and this puts them on to be more solicitous and careful, to take on the mo-bands, and to cast the knot the faster, because the heart is deceitful: "Come, (say they here) and let us join ourselves to the Lord, in a perpetual covenant never to be forgotten." They are not content with a covenant, except it be sicker; the heart protests against itself if it shall draw back, and resigns and renounces its liberty to do so any more, if it may be called liberty. 9 A person would aim to have himself sure and satisfied as to this, that he hath really given his consent, that he may have quietness in the assurance of its being so; yet, not laying the weight of his peace on his clearness and assurance, but because his comfort much depends thereon, therefore he will endeavour to have any blank filled up, and the business put to a point: He comes to this covenanting, with holy fear, self-suspicion and jealousy; and goeth from it with fear: And as he is attended with this fear in covenanting, so in receiving the sacrament; the seal of the covenant; "Come, (say they) and let us join ourselves to the Lord, in a perpetual covenant that shall never be forgotten." O so sure as they would have it! Ye who shall thro' grace come thus, shall find the Lord Jesus waiting and ready to welcome you.

But, 'tis like, ye will ask, How is the sacrament made useful and helpful in this joining to the Lord in covenant? I Answer in general, as to the believer, That all the promises are his, and it seals all the blessings of the covenant to him, because the condition of the covenant is found in him: Even as a pardon given to a rebel on condition he lay down his arms, when he doth lay them down and accepts of the pardon, the seal is appended to it, which makes it firm and sure. But what if the persons doubt of their having entered into the covenant? ANSWER I. They are either such as are mere strangers to God, and have no desire after, nor respect to the covenant; those are under God's curse, and shall get no good of the sacrament, because they resolve not to take Christ to fulfil the condition of the covenant in them, and are not in earnest to be in under the bond of the covenant: Yet, if even such would seriously resolve to fulfil the condition, or rather to take Christ to help them to fulfil

it, they should be welcome. Or they are such as are doubting, tho' they have some honest desire: Such would remember, the bargain is mutual, and they must engage to God, if they would have God engaged to them: And, if ye have not done it before, do it even now, and the sacrament shall be useful and helpful to you, in these respects: More particularly, 1. For sealing this general truth, "If I believe in Christ, I shall have eternal life:" In which respect, 'tis like a pardon offered to a rebel on condition he lay down his arms; he would first see it in writ, and then he would have it sealed: Well, (saith the king) ye shall get it sealed. 2. 'Tis useful, and hath influence in a moral way, to make you accept of pardon, and to enter in the covenant: In which respect, 'tis an argument, as to allure the rebel to accept of the pardon, so to perswade and assure him, that on his acceptance he shall have it actually and certainly, when 'tis holden forth, sealed: For, saith the Lord, in the sacrament, ye have my covenant, and here I am ready to seal it. 3. It furthers our joining in covenant, in respect of its clear holding forth and manifesting the blessings of the covenant. The word saith, that ye are sinners, and that ye will get nothing that is truly good but in and through Christ; and that God is content to covenant with you, and to pardon your sins thro' him: And the sacrament brings Christ and the blessings of the covenant to be some way visible and sensible to you; and the gospel tells how it is done. 4. In the sacrament the Lord condescends in the most formal way to covenant; for in it he saith, Take you my Son's blood to wash you who are guilty and filthy: And your taking is, as it were, a striking of hands with him, and a saying, Content, Lord, let this blood wash me. And thus, looking to the word of institution, which gives footing to faith, and exercising faith thereon as your warrant, your faith is helped to take hold of Christ by and in the sacrament. 5. It helps to close with the covenant, by letting you see the grounds of the covenant, whereon it is bottomed and built. If thou shouldst say, Tho' God would covenant with me, I will not keep: The sacrament holds out Christ as Cautioner, that hath put himself in our room, and engaged in our name to make us forth-coming. And if thou shouldst yet

words added by them, to shew their earnest desire to keep and stand to the covenant: the one is, "a perpetual covenant:" the other a covenant "that shall not be forgotten;" the impression whereof may never wear away. And this we conceive to be their meaning, 1. Because to forget the covenant, in Scripture, is to deal falsely in it; and to forget the covenant, and to break it, are the same. 2. Because it is (as we take it) opposed to their fear of false dealing in the covenant: As if they had said, We were once in covenant with God, but we did deal falsely in it, and forgot it; let us now therefore "join ourselves in a perpetual covenant never to be forgotten:" let it be a constant and standing, a lasting, even an everlasting bargain.

This being the meaning of the words, we shall speak to Four Observations from them, (the substance whereof ye have heard touched on already) and these are,

FIRST, That the great hazard which a people covenanting with God are in, is to slip and slide from their tie and engagements to him, and to forget the covenant.

The SECOND is, That the great evidence of right entering in covenant with God, is to be serious and much concerned in keeping of it, even as much as in entering into it.

The THIRD is, That the great design and duty of a covenanting with God is, never to forget the covenant, but freshly to remember it, so as to be answerable to it in practice.

The FOURTH is, That the great mean whereby this design is got prosecuted, and this duty performed, is adhering and cleaving to God, according to the covenant. "Let us (say they) join to the Lord in a covenant." In this respect, adhering to him in it, is the mean to keep covenant, so as we may never fall from it.

The FIRST Observation then is, "That the great hazard that a people covenanting with God are in, is to slip and fall from their engagement to him: Or, There is such a covenanting with God, as people may soon forget and fall from;" a temporary and unsicker covenanting, that holds not. "A perpetual covenant never to be forgotten." supposeth that there is a sort of covenanting that slips like a knotless thread (to speak so) and abides not. This is sadly verified in the experience of many

common professors of religion, and often even of the godly themselves in a measure; even now there will be a bargaining with God, and within a little they will forget it: Peter saith, "Though all should forsake thee, yet will not I:" and yet within a very little he is found sleeping, and that same night denies and forswears his Master. So, Deut. v. the people say, "All that the Lord hath commanded us, we will do:" and the Lord saith, "They have well said, O that there were such a heart in them!" and yet, within the space of little more than forty days, they set up a golden calf for their god. So, Psal. lxxviii. 34, 35, 36, 37. "When he slew them, then they sought him; they returned and enquired early after God: They remembered that God was their Rock, and the most High their Redeemer. But they did flatter him with their mouth, and lied unto him with their tongue; for their hearts were not right with God, neither were they stedfast in his covenant:" they abode not by the mint and effay which they made. But I think this is beyond any need of proof; we rather stand in need to have the impression of it made deep upon our hearts, and to go from the work we have been about with holy fear and jealousy over ourselves, bespeaking ourselves thus, What if this engagement we have come under, hold not, but prove like "the hanging down of the head like a bulrush," for a day? Serious thoughts of this hazard would, thro' God's blessing, farther the exercise of watchfulness a great deal more. When carnal self-confidence and fearlessness creep on and take hold of us, we (as it were) lay aside our armour, foolishly fancying that there is no hazard, but that all will be well; were there more of this holy fear, there would not be such frequent surprizes. Have ye not often been surprized, and proved unstedfast in God's covenant? And, since ye have so many and clear proofs of the truth of this doctrine in your own sad experience, is there not the greater need of holy fear and watchfulness?

The Second Observation is, "That those who are sincere and serious in covenanting with God, will be no less so, in keeping it, and standing to it." Where people are found and honest at the heart, it will be no less an up-taking work to them, how to keep covenant, than it was to get it entered in: Therefore these here mentioned have it as one piece of their seriously up-taking business, how to be joined

to the Lord in covenant; and another, how to get it stood to, so as it may be a perpetual one, never to be forgotten. The same reasons that prove that there should be, or that there is seriousness in making and closing the covenant, will also prove that there should be, and will be seriousness in endeavours to keep it; for, if the person honestly mind to enjoy the blessings covenanted, he must and will endeavour to keep and stand to the covenant; if he honestly mind, and sincerely desire to be in good terms with God thro' the covenant, he must and will endeavour to stand to the terms of the covenant, and breach of covenant will waken a challenge. If it be a principle of true saving grace that puts a person to desire to be under the bond of God's covenant, that same principle will make him desire and endeavour to abide under that bond, and to keep faithfully to him: Thus David saith, Psal. cxix. 29, 30. "I have chosen the way of thy precepts; and I have stuck unto thy testimonies." There is a choosing of the covenant and testimonies, and a design of sticking to them, when upon choice closed with.

The Use of this point serves for Instruction. Would ye faint have a mark of your honesty in covenanting with God? Here it is, and we know no better mark or evidence to give you than this, even to be serious and much concerned in keeping covenant: God will never account that man to be a true covenanter, that will cast his law behind his back. The apostle James, Chap. i. speaks of two sorts of men that are hearers of the word; and he compares the one sort, viz. forgetful hearers, to a man, "who beholding his natural face in a glass, goes away, and straightway forgets what manner of man he was:" But the other sort are such, "who are not only hearers, but doers of the word: That man (saith he) shall be blessed in his deed." It is not the sayer, but the doer and the keeper of the words of the covenant, that is blessed. As many as seriously engage to God, are put on (as we said before) with as much seriousness, in endeavouring the performance of their engagement, as to come under it: I speak not of a perfect performance, or fulfilling of engagements without any the least defect, that is not to be win at here; but of serious minding and endeavouring, in the Lord's strength, the performance of that which we are engaged to: For there is a great difference betwixt men's failing and slipping of infirmity, and

their singing with allowance; the former sheweth a body of death to be yet remaining, and may consist with faithfulness in God's covenant; but the latter speaks out a slothful, careless and negligent undervaluing of God and of his covenant. Let never such a man cloke himself with the pretext of being in covenant with God, nor palliate his palpably gross and voluntary breaches of covenant, with the pretext of infirmity, who doth not seriously drive it as his great design, to be faithful in God's covenant.

Now, would ye know wherein this seriousness in keeping and performing covenant consists? Ye may take it in these characters. The man that is serious in performing his engagement, 1. His heart is taken up with it, and there is an ardent longing to be answerable to the covenant that he is entred into with God: His greatest wish in all the world is, as to be in it, so to be faithful in keeping it; therefore saith the Psalmist, Psal. exix. 5. "O that my ways were directed to keep thy statutes!" and this is given as a mark of "the blessed man, who is undefiled in the way." And saith he, ver. 6. "Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect unto all thy commandments:" which is a reason of the former, and a confirmation of it: He designs to be short in his obedience to no command, and he does not allow himself in his shortcoming even as to degree, but is constant in pursuing his design always, even unto the end. 2. Seriousness in performing appeareth by kindly acknowledging the impression of the weightiness of the tie and obligation that the covenant lays on persons; it somewhat affects and burdens them, so that they walk not so lightly as others do under the obligation and debt of the covenant, tho' it be a friendly debt, and also a privilege. Their burden is not, that they are under the obligation, but how to get it performed; thus saith the Psalmist, Psal. lvi. 12. "Thy vows are upon me, O God:" They take on vows to God, and keep them on, and walk as being under them. This is a main thing to be looked to in keeping covenant. 3. This seriousness in performing appears in the fear that persons have of going wrong and miscarrying: They are afraid to break to God; neither are any so suspicious of them, as they are of themselves, knowing by sad experience, that their "hearts are deceitful above all things:" And this is a very native evidence, considering what we heard of our

sickleness, which cannot be without the impression of fear. 4. It appears in a holy carefulness and diligence to prevent that which they fear: Lest at any time they let a buckle slip, (to speak so) and lest that which they feared come on them, their fear puts them to diligence to prevent the thing feared. This makes them to fall and pray, and to be watchful over themselves in loose and untender company, and to eschew them as far as they can, and to hazard some loss, rather than to put themselves under a snare; watching and praying, lest they fall into the sin of dealing falsely in God's covenant. 5. It appears in the sharpness of challenges, when any thing miscarries in their hand: They are soon challenged for the very first beginnings of a breach; a wrong look will affect them: Therefore saith Job, Chap. xxxi. "I made a covenant with my eyes, why then should I look upon a maid?" And the heart, while tender, will lothe and fear at the least thing that hath the remotest tendency towards a breach, were it but the appearance of evil. Any the least guilt soon toucheth and smiteth them, not only that which is their own, but even that of others: Thus good Ezra saith, Chap. ix. "Should we again break thy commandments, and join in affinity with the people of these abominations?" And he lieth in the dust before God mourning, because of this. 6. It appears in respect of the exercise of a person's faith: As 'tis an up-taking work and business to honest souls, to get their faith founded rightly in closing the covenant with God, that they be well grounded in believing; so it is no less an up-taking and exercising work, to be improving their faith on God's promises, to make them forth-coming according to their engagement, and for keeping covenant: Which is the apostle's exercise, Gal. ii. 20. to "live by faith on the Son of God: I am (saith he) crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh, is by faith on the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." And, try it who will, they shall find it to be an up-taking work, rightly to exercise faith for entertaining of spiritual life, and for preventing a covenant-breach with God. It may be, for as many professed covenanters as are here, that but few of you know much, if any thing at all, what it is to be taken up with being answerable to the covenant according to your engage-

ments: This, no doubt, makes much unsound work, that ye do not singly and seriously design this; that ye reach not forward, that ye bear not down the body, and bring it under subjection, lest ye come short here. If ye were suitably serious, these characters and evidences might be as so many directions to you: There would be much watchfulness in doing; ready entertaining of challenges and convictions; much heart-melting under the sense of wrongs done to God; and the very appearances of evil would be fear'd at, and appear terrible. There is an evil readily incident to many professors of religion, that they would fain be at marks of a good spiritual state, and of being in covenant with God, but such as would not disturb their carnal confidence ease, and laziness, nor put them on to painful diligence: But we have no such marks to give; neither dare we, for the fear of God, and because of the hazard of soul, assign any such; there being none such given or assigned in the word of God: Nay, let me tell you, that, if there be not painful diligence and faithfulness in keeping covenant with God, it will darken the light of any other mark that can be given: and, no doubt, 'tis this negligence and unfaithfulness that makes many good marks, clear in themselves, dark to many Christians, while they give not diligence to make their calling and election sure, and give not all diligence to add one grace to another, and one degree of grace to another: It is also the cause of uncomfortable walking, yea, of uncomfortable communicating. But to be sincere and serious in owning our covenant-engagements, and faithfully forth-coming in the fruits thereof, and in a correspondent conversation, is a mark that will give comfort, and some quietness at least, till comfort come; the Lord will comfortably confess such as faithfully confess him.

The Third Observation is, "That it is and will be the great study of persons really entred in covenant with God, to have it an abiding bargain, a perpetual covenant never to be forgotten:" This is their design, as well as their duty, that their practice and walk may be suitable to the covenant. And it being the main thing implied in the words, and that which we intend to insist on, I shall, in the prosecution of it, speak a little to these Three.

I. To what it is to aim to have God's covenant perpetual,

and never to be forgotten. 2. To the reasons and the ground that there is to press this. And, 3. To some motives and encouragements for exciting to it.

For the First, viz. What it is to study to have God's covenant perpetual, and never to be forgotten. We take it up in these particulars: 1. That those entred in covenant would drive the great design of the covenant; which is summed in these two words, To have God to be ours, and ourselves to be God's: 'Tis even that which we have in answer to the first question of our excellent Catechism, "What is man's chief end? To enjoy God, and to glorify him:" to enjoy him as our own God, and to glorify him, by acknowledging ourselves to be his, and by devoting ourselves to his service, as being a people "formed for himself, to shew forth his praise." This should be vigorously driven, as the great design of the covenant with God; and it would be a notable help to keep covenant, even to live and walk so as we may have God's company: For what use serves God's covenant unto us, and our entering therein, if we continue as great strangers to him as before? If this be not driven as our design, we forget wherefore we covenanted. 2. There would be a minding of our own obligation in the covenant, as the condition or mean by which the end, viz. the enjoying of God, is come at; which is, in a word, to be his, to walk before him, as he willeth Abraham to do, "Walk before me, and be thou perfect:" God himself is that which the covenant should principally aim at; and walking before him is the mean appointed for coming at that end. In short, whatever the covenant saith in reference to our duty, as, to abandon lusts, to be "holy in all manner of conversation," to be "watchful, to glorify God in our bodies and spirits which are his," &c. is that which we are tyed to in the covenant, and which we would seriously drive at as our great design. 3. There would be a minding and remembring of God's engagement to us in the covenant, which is a part of it, as well as our engagement to him, and never to be forgotten by us: Return (saith the Lord, Jer. iii.) backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings: Return, for I am married to you: I will be your God and guide even unto death: I will never leave thee nor forsake thee," &c. And this minding and remembring of God's part of the

covenant, is a crediting of his promise. Many believers mind and remember their own part of the covenant, but forget that God is tyed to them; (which is to remember, not a mutual engagement, such as the covenant bears out, but only our own particular engagement) which makes us have so many failings on our side, and doth very much weaken our hands in duty; because we lay not the weight of our performances on God that hath promised, "who is faithful, and will also do it." We will find it to be frequent and familiar to the saints mentioned in Scripture, to mind God's part of the covenant as well as their own, and particularly to David in the book of Psalms, who saith, "Thou hast made a covenant with thine Anointed: Thou hast laid help upon One that is mighty: Art not thou from everlasting our God? Lord, remember thy covenant:" that is, the Covenant that God hath made with his people; and often elsewhere. The great weight of a believer's life and consolation lies here: Alas! what would our life or our engagement be, and what would our comfort and hope be, without his engagement to us in the covenant? And, if this be not suitably minded and remembered, it will prove but a very heartless bargain. 4. It implies this, seriously to endeavour to conform our practice to the many great obligations that we ly under to him, and which God's offer and covenant do on many accounts call us to. This is a short hint of what it is to "keep and do the covenant of God, and to perform it alway even unto the end, to have his covenant perpetual, and never to be forgotten."

As for the Second, to wit, the grounds and reasons of this, and whereby it may be pressed. 1st, We would think of, and believe the reality of God's covenant, the reality of the promises in it, and of all that is spoken of it; and would put ourselves to it, if indeed we look on it as such. The truth is, it is the language of our unbelief, that we scarcely think God to be in earnest; as if all that is spoken of this covenant were but a cunningly devised fable: If we really believed, that by this blessed covenant we may be brought to enjoy God, and to be made conform to his image in holiness, to have our vile bodies at last made conform to his glorious body, &c. and that as certainly we shall be possessed of such great and glorious privileges by keeping this covenant, as we are certain that this world is

yet standing; such a faith would prove to us "the evidence of things not seen, and the substance of things hoped for;" and would be a notable incitement and sharp spur to holy activity in, and to quick dispatch of called-for duty. O but it be a good and real bargain, and will have wonderful following, to all that keep it! and, whether this be now believed or not, it will be found a little hence, that this bargain was one of the best that ever was heard tell of in the world: *sdlly*, We would seriously bethink ourselves, what will come of it, in case there be grossly unfaithful dealing and unsteadfastness in God's covenant. I shall only name these five things that will follow on it. 1. Much sin. 2. Much shame. 3. Much reflection on God. 4. Much wrath, and, 5. Much want of peace, and much anxiety, in the conscience that is guilty of this sin. (1.) I say, much sin. Better there had never been a covenant in your offer, and that ye had never profest your entring into covenant with God: "'Tis better (saith the wise man, *Ecl. v. 5*) not to vow to God, than to vow and not to perform." It had been better that many of you had been crushed in your mother's belly, or that ye had been born Turks and Pagans, and had lived and died so, than to be found among them that deal falsely in God's covenant: the grossest sins of Pagans are in some respect as no sins in comparison of this, *John xv. 22*. (2.) There will be much shame before God, even shame and confusion of face, everlasting shame. They "shall rise from the dead to shame and everlasting contempt," *Dan. xii*. Sinners will have much shame, ere all be done, for every sin: But such as have wickedly betrayed their trust to God, and, after they had made profession of entring in covenant with him, have dealt perfidiously and falsely in it, will be in a manner hissed at amongst devils and reprobate Pagans, who never had such offers, neither made such professions; and their condemnation will be acknowledged to carry eminent and conspicuous desert in it; because such had a good bargain, and dealt treacherously with God, and quite marred it to themselves: They have often also much shame amongst men even here; "The man (saith Christ) that hears my sayings, and does them not, is like unto a foolish builder, that built his house upon the sand." And elsewhere he

resembles rash engagers in profest covenanting with him, to men who sit not down to count the cost, that begin to build, and, not being able to finish, expose themselves to the mockage, scorn and derision of all that pass by: Such and such a man (will some be ready to say) was a great professor; but now, behold what is become of him; take him up yonder; he seemed once to have some tenderness, but now he is quite turned aside, and become gross and loose. Men of any moral honesty and ingenuity will be ashamed to break their word and to violate their engagements one to another in worldly matters; how much greater shame is it to break to God, and to deal falsely in his covenant? (3.) It hath deep reflections upon God; for the covenant-breaker saith on the matter, that it repents him that ever he made it, for he hath never gotten good of it; and that God hath not been faithful in keeping to him, and that therefore he thought himself loosed from all its obligations. Now, will any of you dare to say, that the covenant is not a good bargain, or that God is not a good, responsal and faithful Party to deal with? "What iniquity have your fathers found in me, (saith the Lord to his professing people, Jer. ii.) that they are gone so far from me? Come (saith he, Micah vi.) before the mountains, and let the hills hear my controversy with you; what iniquity have ye found in me? wherein have I wearied you? testify against me." Sure, all that depart from God, rub reproach on God's covenant as a bad bargain, and on God as a bad and unfaithful Party to deal with: O high and horrid practical atheism and blasphemy! Doubtless such will find that they have played the fools egregiously, in "committing these two great evils, in forsaking God the Fountain of living waters, and in digging to themselves cisterns, even broken cisterns that could hold no water." O if ye could imagine, what ye will think of it ere long, when ye will not get a drop of water to cool your tongue, because ye said by your practice, that God was not worth the having, and "to the Almighty, Depart from us, we will have none of thee, neither will we have the knowledge of thy ways!" (4.) Much want of peace and much anxiety will follow upon it: Even the penitent and covenanting people of God, Jer. iii. 20, 21. have much bitterness on this account of treacherous dealing in God's covenant: "A voice

of weeping and lamentation is heard on the mountains, the children of Israel saying, We have perverted our way, we have forsaken the Lord our God." How much more bitterness of another nature, how much more smart, vexation, anguish, agony, and gnawing of conscience shall impenitent sinners have, on account of their false and perfidious dealing in God's covenant? This will make the hearts of many to quake and tremble for terror. If ye get repentance, it will be a heart-break to you; and, if ye get not repentance, much heartless heart-break and crushing is abiding you in the end for evermore: And, O what trembling of heart, failing of eyes, and sorrow of mind may be betwixt and that! (5) Much wrath will follow on it in the day of the Lord, if it be continued in: And judge ye within yourselves if there be so many aggravations of, or so many threatnings against any sin, as of and against unfaithful and false dealing in God's covenant; this sin hath made the Jews to ly, these sixteen hundred years and above, scattered among all nations as a curse: Therefore make it your great design and business now, to be faithful to God, and to have the covenant with him "a perpetual covenant, never to be forgotten."

As for the Third, viz. Some motives and encouragements to excite you to be faithful in God's covenant, and to study to have it "a perpetual covenant never to be forgotten:" Consider, in the 1st. place, that it is a singularly good and none-such bargain to them that keep covenant, there is no bargain more lovely to them that keep touches with God: "It is (saith dying David, 2 Sam. xxiii.) all my salvation, and all my desire:" it hath all things in it that my heart can wish. We make a pitiful and poor life to ourselves, thro' our undervaluing God's covenant; the believer, by improving of it, might have (as we use to speak) a lord's life, yea, a king's life, yea, a life infinitely preferable to the life of all the great men and monarchs on earth: "Having all things, tho' possessing nothing," as it is, 2 Cor. vi. 10. And saith the apostle, Philip. iv. "I have all, I abound and have no lack;" while, in the mean time, he was living on a little charity from others: We might have a good life here and hereafter. Doth it not exceedingly commend God's covenant, that neither sickness, poverty, reproach,

contempt, persecution, nor death itself, tho' violent and bloody, can mar this excellent life? When the covenant comes to judgment, "Who can lay any thing to his charge? It is God that justifieth, who shall condemn him?" He hath a Friend before him, "Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant," and is in good terms with God. The great advantage of it in this life and in that which is to come, ("for godliness is great gain, having the promise of both,") may abundantly commend the covenant, and faithfulness in it. I am perswaded, there is no suiter or wooer to court and put in for the sinner's heart and affection, that can possibly out-bid God's covenant: Can the "lust of the eye, the lust of the flesh, or the pride of life;" can profit, pleasure or preferment make such profers? Is there such advantage to be had in serving them, as there is to be had in serving God? By the one, ye "bring forth fruit unto holiness, and in the end reap eternal life;" but, by the other, ye "sow to the flesh, and shall of the flesh reap corruption," a poor and hungry harvest. 3dly, The very keeping of covenant with God, is in itself an advantage. It hath a great reward in the bosom of it; for it puts the person to love God, to delight in him, to place its happiness in him, to study holiness and mortification of sin; and is there not great advantage in these? Can ye think or say, that there is any prejudice in these and such things as these, namely, to be blameless in your conversation, to be sincere and not a hypocrite, to be serious and not luke-warm? I am perswaded, that, if ye will but put it seriously to your own consciences, ye will be forced to say, that sincerity in religion is better than hypocrisy; and steadfastness in God's covenant, than treachery: And, what more do we call for? And therefore let me, on this ground, and as ye would not come in tops with your own consciences, beseech you to study faithfulness in the covenant. God's covenant hath a great advantage of the hearers of it, and of professed engagers in it, even a friend in their bosoms, viz. Conscience, that will side with it, and say that it was a good bargain, that the terms were very reasonable, and that no prejudice could come by it, but unspeakably much advantage; and will tell the man, that it would have been his honour, and for his profit, to have kept it, and to have been faithful in it: Why then, will the Lord say, didst thou

deal falsely in it, and renounce it? The wretched man's conscience will answer, that there was no shadow of reason for it, it was plainly folly and madness; for to "keep and do God's covenant and commandment, is people's wisdom before all nations," Deut. iv. It is a sad matter, that when men may have that which is infinitely preferable to what they are so eager in seeking after, even true riches, pleasure and honour, peace that passeth all natural understanding, joy unspeakable and full of glory, and every good thing, by covenanting with God, and by faithful dealing therein; that they should not drive this as their great design, and make it their great work and uptaking business: "O that there were such a heart in them (saith the Lord, Deut. v.) that they might fear me, and keep my commandments always, that it might be well with them, and with their children for ever!" Men are ready to say, We must provide for our families, and, under that specious pretext, they shift this main work; but, ah, fools that they are! there is no way comparable to this, to provide for families and children, even to have themselves and their children entered into God's covenant, and made to deal faithfully in it! this engageth him to provide for, and become Tutor unto the man's children: And, is there not great encouragement here, to have every good thing bestowed, and all carking care and anxiety concerning ourselves and children removed? Truly, We would consider, that God is a singular good Party to deal with, very tender of them that aim to deal honestly with him: He is indeed severe and terrible, when he becomes the Avenger of a broken covenant; but he is most tender towards honest engagers, who sincerely endeavour to keep touches with him; he is no rigid Interpreter of their actions, but is ready to put the best sense on them that they are capable of: "Like as a father (saith the Psalmist, Psal. ciii.) pitieth his children, so doth the Lord pity them that fear him." He is a Father that will take little off the hand of his children, when he knows them to have a will to the work, when he will not deal so with others: "All his ways are mercy and truth to them that keep his covenant and his testimonies;" It is not meant of such as keep it perfectly, for so they needed not mercy; but of them that honestly design and endeavour to keep it: And, may not

that encourage to be faithful in God's covenant, that he is so easy to please? 4thly, Consider, that he hath graciously stuffed his covenant with promises meet for the through-bearing of them that would fain keep covenant. If it be an evil heart that will not love God, which troubles them, the promise is, "I will circumcise their heart, and the hearts of their seed to love the Lord their God:" whereas no others, who are without the covenant, or deal unfaithfully in it, can expect the performance of any such promise: If it be a backsliding heart, the promise is, Jer. iii. 22. "I will heal your backslidings:" If it be the fear of departing from God that troubles them, the promise is, Jer. xxxii. 40. "I will put my fear in their heart, that they shall not depart from me:" If it be the dominion of sin that they fear, the promise is, Rom. vi. 14. "Sin shall not have dominion over you, for ye are not under the law, but under grace:" that is, under the covenant of grace: And, if it be fear of the prevailing of Satan's tentations that troubles them, the promise is, "The God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly." May we not then take heart to be faithful in this covenant? Yea, he hath also condescended to come under this engagement too, even to make us forthcoming in the covenant; "I will call (saith the Psalmist, Psal. lvii.) upon the Lord, who performeth all things for me." It might have been said to David, How wilt thou get all done that thou hast undertaken? He answers, "I will call upon him who performeth all things for me;" and so I will get them all done and performed, so as I may hope to be accepted on the Mediator's account and for his sake. 5thly, Consider the Mediator of the covenant, who is Surety and Cautioner, not only for believers debt but also for their duty; therefore he is called, Heb. vii. "the Surety of this better covenant:" And, when Christ and we are engaged in one bond, there is ground for us to expect that something will be got done; tho' the principal debtor be not much worth, yet the Cautioner is worthy and infinitely responsible. 6thly, Consider, that there are already many, who have passed thorow the troublesom sea of this world, and have been marvelously helped; and 'tis but a little, and all you honest engagers to the Lord will be thorow the same sea, and fairly set on land; your warfare ere long will be at an end, the prize

will be got without any more fighting: What is your fighting, sighing and walking heavily, clothed, as it were, in mourning for a little time? It is but for a few years, and it may be to some of you not so long; and, within a little space, "the day of refreshing from the presence of the Lord will come;" a relieving of you from your post, a loosing of you from your bonds, a final discharge from your warfare will come; "and a new song will be put in your mouths, and palms in your hands." O but faithful dealing with God in the covenant will have a heartsom out-gate? When ye shall come ashore, "all tears shall be wiped from your eyes, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away:" and ye shall meet with that word, O warin word! "Come, ye faithful servants, enter into the joy of your Lord." Ye will not always fight and wrestle, neither will ye be always tempted and troubled; rest and repose is a-coming, 'tis even at hand: Then one ray of his countenance will be infinitely more heartsom, refreshing and satisfying, than all these things that ye are now called to abandon and part with, can possibly amount to; Christ's first welcome to his Father's house will eternally banish the remembrance of all the sad things that ye meet with in this world.

The Fourth and last Observation is, "That the great mean of securing a covenant, and making him stedfast, is, faith exercised on God, or adhering to him by faith, by virtue of this covenant." It is not, to lay weight on, or trust to our own strength; but, seeing God hath made a promise of through-bearing, to undertake the duties that we are called to in his strength, trusting to his faithfulness, and to his furnishing of us, according to the covenant: As, when poor sinners are summoned to appear before God, and they have no righteousness of their own, they are to step forward trusting to Christ's righteousness; so when they are called to duty, and they have no strength of their own to enable them to a suitable discharge thereof, they are to consider "that God is faithful, who hath promised, and who will also do it." And indeed believers have found in their comfortable experience that, when they have adventured on duty with a believing look to God's covenanted strength, they have found it go sweetly and surprisngly well with them: Thus it is said of those worthies mentioned, Heb. xi. that "through faith they

wrought righteousness," as well as they did all other things thereby. This also is it, which the Lord inculcaterh, John xv. "Abide in me (saith he) and ye shall bring forth much fruit: As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine, no more can ye, except ye abide in me; for without me ye can do nothing;" Where it is clear, that it is not enough that we be in Christ, but that we must abide in him, and have continual dependence on him for the influences of life and strength derived from him.

Ye then that would be faithful in God's covenant, and would have it "perpetual never to be forgotten," must especially make use of this mean. Make conscience of all other appointed means: "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation:" But see that ye neglect not this mean; which if ye do, 'the watchman will watch in vain.' And your grip or hold will be unsicker, if ye make not use of him to make it sure, and to keep it so. And therefore,

1. Mind seriously and constantly what ye are, in and of yourselves; even fickle, feckless, weak, feeble and unconstant creatures, not daring to undertake any thing in your own strength.
2. Remember what God is; and that ye have a worthy, able and responsal Cautioner.
3. Remember that ye are engaged in a 'covenant never to be forgotten.' Forgetting is the first rise of unfaithfulness.
4. Remember the promises that God hath made for your through-bearing, and let faith be exercised on them: Join with diligence and watchfulness a suitable exercise of faith.
5. Take a serious look, every day when ye go to pray, of your resolutions and engagements; renew them frequently and seriously in his own strength, and be casting the other knot; and put the heart distinctly to say, This was my bargain, and I will through grace abide by it: and then go and pray over it, that ye may be made faithful in your thus covenanting with God, that ye may be enabled to pay your vows, and make your honest resolutions practicable; levelling at this as your scope and design in all duties: I have said such a thing, and have not kept my word; Lord, forgive it for Christ's sake; I am engaged in this, and that, and the other duty; Lord, help me to perform. And, for your furtherance in humiliation and soft walking before God, look on all your sins (as) aggravated by this unfaithful and treacherous dealing in God's covenant; and on all duties, as those

which your covenant with God binds you to depend on him for strength to be communicated to you according to the covenant, for going about them suitably and acceptably: And within a little while ye shall get a fair pass to be gone, and a full discharge of all that ye were trusted with, according to the covenant. And the Lord help you to be faithful, so that it may be betwixt God and you in very deed "a perpetual covenant that shall not be forgotten."

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S E R M O N XIII.

A SERMON preached immediately before the
COMMUNION,

On MATTH. xxvi. 28, 29.

For this is my Blood of the new testament, which is shed for many, for the remission of sins. But I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine; until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's Kingdom.

ALTHO' we had no more to do at our meeting together in this place to-day, but to read and hear these same wonderful words, if our hearts were in a suitable frame, knowing and considering what we are about and doing, we would be in a divine rapture and transport of admiration at his love, and kindled into a flame of holy zeal for his glory, by them. O what sweet and happy words are these from our dying Lord Jesus Christ his mouth! "Eye hath not seen, ear hath not heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive, what things the Lord hath prepared for them that wait for him." And indeed there is a sum of them in these words, they being a compend of the testament and legacy which our Lord hath left to his friends: O sinners, be of good

cheer, there are good news and glad tidings of great joy here: Here is the new covenant and all that is in it, and remission of sins is in particular, as the legacy: Here is Christ, which maketh this covenant savoury; and it is confirmed by his death, who is the Testator thereof; which makes it sure: Here is heaven and eternal glory; and what would you have more? "This is (saith he) my blood of the new testament, which is shed for the remission of the sins of many:" Which holds forth the promises, and the convey of them; the legacy, and how it comes to us. "I will not (saith he) drink of this fruit of the wine, until I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom:" There is heaven, the heart'som up-shot of all. Remission of sins come to sinners covenant-wise, thro' Christ's blood; and by closing with Christ, and making application of this blood, sinners come to get remission of sins, and all the benefits of the covenant; and are brought at last to drink the new wine of heaven, and to drink it new with Christ, even to share in his glory, to have one feast and glory with him. And truly, if there were no more to be said, we may most confidently say, that these are wonderful glad tidings, which our blessed Lord Jesus hath left to be the great subject of the doctrine of the gospel, and the scope of the sacraments.

We shall, 1. Open up the words a little. 2. We shall draw some doctrines from them. And then, 3. Insist in the application.

FIRST then, for Explication. From the 26th. verse is set down the Institution of the supper of the Lord; wherein we have, 1. What Christ did. 2. What he commands the disciples, and us in them, to do. 3. He explicates, in these words, what he hath been doing, and commanded to be done: "This is my blood (saith he) of the new testament," &c. as if he had said, Would you know, what it is that I am doing? There was a covenant made long since betwixt my Father and me, concerning the elect; wherein I condescended, and transacted to take on man's nature, and in that nature to suffer and satisfy Divine Justice for their sins: And this is the commemoration of my satisfaction, according to that covenant, and the exhibiting and giving to you a confirmation of your interest in all the blessings of that covenant, whereof remission of

sins is one, and a main one. He needed, as would seem, to have said no more, but that he was going to suffer, and to suffer for this cause, even to purchase redemption to sinners: But he will further shew his disciples, and in them all believers in him, that this came not to pass by guess, but according to an old covenant and eternal transaction that past betwixt Jehovah and him; and so adds the sacrament to be a commemoration, and a more full confirmation thereof to believers, of all that is purchased by it, and promised in it. In the 29th. verse, he hath two words further, one of warning, another of encouragement: 1. One of warning, "I say unto you, Henceforth I will not drink of the fruit of the vine:" As if he had said, Take heed what ye are doing, make this communion very welcome, and let it confirm and strengthen you against the trials that are coming; for I will have no more communions with you after this manner in this world. 2. A word of encouragement and consolation: Because they might think and say, Alas! Lord, what will become of us, if we shall have no more communions with thee? Be not (saith he to them on the matter) discouraged: We shall yet have more and more intimate communion than ever we had here on earth: There is a day coming, when we shall have a sweet communion in the kingdom of heaven together, when we shall drink it new, when we shall have the thing signified, even communion without the intervention of ordinances, in the full harvest of joy in God, in his kingdom. Then, ver. 30. as if he were going to a triumph, he and they sing a hymn or psalm; partly thereby to teach us to be cheerful, and partly to shew that singing of psalms is not unsuitable for this action.

To make the former words, and what we are to say on them, a little more clear; we would in this sacrament, which here the Lord explicates, consider three or four things. First, Christ's offer: Wherein there are two things, viz. the outward and visible signs, the elements; and the inward invisible thing signified by them, which is Christ's body and blood. In the offer then, in short, we have not only the element, or sign, but the thing signified and represented by it: Even as in the word of the gospel there are these two, viz. so many words made up of letters and syllables, and the matter contained in them. Secondly,

Consider the receiving of Christ's offer, wherein there are two things, 1. The act of receiving the element by the hand: 2. The heart's receiving what is offered in and by the elements: Even as, in hearing the word, there is the giving or lending of the ear to the voice of words, that they may be understandingly heard; and there is the receiving what is spoken, by faith in the heart. As Christ holds forth both in his offer, so the believer would both ways receive; by the hand the element should be received, and by faith the thing signified should be received. Thirdly, Ye would consider this application of the thing signified in a twofold respect, 1. As it holds out the entering of us into the covenant in order to the receiving of the pardon of sin, when the sacrament is considered complexly with the word: 2. As it applieth Christ and the benefits that come by him for our consolation. Christ is to be received in the former respect, before he can be received in the latter; we must needs receive Christ in his offer, ere we can receive any benefit that comes by him: Therefore the word goes along with the sacrament, that we may get a grip and catch-hold of Christ by the covenant: for they that are without the covenant are without Christ and all saving benefit by him; but where Christ is received, and faith cleaveth with him as he is offered, the soul may warrantably make application of him, not only for pardon of sin, the particular benefit here expressly mentioned, but for all the other benefits of the covenant; whereas they who have not faith, have nothing, and receive nothing; but are deeply guilty thro' their not receiving, but rather rejecting and despising of Christ and his benefits. Fourthly, Ye would consider this sacrament, as it seals directly our warrant to receive Christ and his benefits, or as it seals our application of Christ and his benefits; for it may be useful for both, and is actually so to believers: In the first respect, we offer to you a good security for your salvation, on condition of your receiving Christ; but, in the second respect, the security is sealed simply, as having God's seal appended to it, to all who have received him. Thus the tree of life was a seal of the covenant of life by works to Adam, if he stood; but it was not a confirmation that he should have life by the covenant, except he fulfilled that which was called for in it. So circumcision was a seal of the righteousness of faith to

Ismael and other visible Church-members, as well as to Isaac, in the first sense, that is, that the security was good; but to Isaac, and believers, it was not only a seal or a confirmation that the security was good, and sufficient in itself, but a seal of confirmation that it should be good to them: Therefore, in coming to partake of the Sacrament, we would premit alway our closing with Christ; and then we have not only God's word and oath, but also the Sacrament for his seal of confirmation of the covenant. In a word, Christ doth offer here to all a pledge that he will make good the covenant; and it is the great guilt of many professors of the gospel, that they close not with him in his offer, so as to make use of it: Which makes them guilty of the body and blood of the Lord; which they neither would nor could be guilty of, if this were not in their offer: But 'tis more to believers, who have by faith closed with Christ; this seal of the covenant accreweth to their security, who have taken God's word, and rested on it: The believer, then, is not only sure in this respect, that he hath a good warrant to trust and lean to, that is, a sealed covenant; but also, that it will not fail him in particular: So that he may say, "I know in whom I have believed." And we would not divide these things that God hath so wisely and well conjoined, viz. closing with Christ and the covenant in the right way, according to the terms thereof; and taking this seal of confirmation of it.

Now, in the Second place, I come to give you a little view and short series of the gospel, in several Observations from the words; that we may haste to that which we more particularly aim at, to wit, the Use of all.

FIRST, then, Observe, "That all men and women, even the elect not excepted, are sinful, and as such considered before God;" so it is said, Isa. liii 6. "All we like sheep have gone astray:" This is the object of the gospel, Sinners; the persons for whose behoof Christ hath made his testament, and to whom he hath left his legacies, are sinners, even sinful men and women; and, the more sin be in them, the more grace shines in God's choosing of such, and in Christ's dying for such, and not choosing nor dying for fallen angels: It is sinners (I say) who are the object of Christ's testament.

SECONDLY, Observe, " That there is a grand design
 " laid by God from eternity for the saving of many sinners,
 " and for procuring to them remission of sins, the fruit of
 " the antient counsel of the blessed and glorious Trinity."
 And this is it, which Christ aims at in all his ordinances, to
 get sinners pardoned, and freed from the curse due to them
 for sin, reconciled, justified, sanctified, and brought to drink
 the new wine of heaven. This is laid down by JEHOVAH,
 as the basis and foundation, whereon he hath reared up a
 magnificent and glorious superstructure of the riches of his
 most sovereignly free grace, for making it to shine forth
 conspicuously and radiantly throughout all ages.

THIRDLY, Observe, " That there is a covenant well-
 " ordered, suited and fitted to promote this great and
 " glorious end and design of saving sinners:" A covenant
 so contrived, as it may well suit the saving of sinners, and
 procure unto them the remission of sins. There is a trans-
 action betwixt God and the Mediator; a Surety and
 Cautioner is provided to take on the debt of the elect, and
 to satisfy justice to the full for all their sins: And this is
 one article of the covenant, that the Mediator should
 undertake thy debt, O believer, and satisfy for it: " He
 was (saith Isaiah, Chap. liii.) wounded for our transgressions,
 bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was
 on him, and by his stripes we are healed."

FOURTHLY, Observe, " That, according to this cove-
 " nant and transaction, our blessed Lord Jesus hath really,
 " actually and fully satisfied for the sins of believers, ac-
 " cording to his undertaking:" So that, as in the counsel
 of God, that great trust was put on him, and he undertook
 the work of sinners redemption; so, now it is, " Father,
 I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do:" The
 covenant is exactly fulfilled on my part, not one article of
 it is unfulfilled; all that was committed to me is now fully
 performed: Hence it was his last words on the cross,
 " It is finished."

FIFTHLY, Observe, " That by the application of the
 " blood of Jesus, thro' a sinner's closing with him and
 " interesting himself in him, he may and doth obtain re-
 " mission of sins, and partake of the benefit of redemption
 " purchased by his blood, even of all the benefits of the
 " covenant." Therefore, when he hath said, " This is

my blood of the new testament, which is shed for the remission of the sins of many;" he turns over the words to them, and tells them, that "they shall drink the fruit of this vine new with him in his Father's kingdom." As it was made sure, that Adam was to have life, on the condition of perfect obedience; so it is as sure to a sinner, taking with his sin, and betaking himself to, and closing with Christ and his satisfaction, that he shall have pardon of sin, and all the benefits of this covenant, even to eternal glory, secured to him.

SIXTHLY, Observe, "That as our blessed Lord Jesus Christ hath purchased this redemption and remission, so he is most willing, desirous, and pressing, that sinners, to whom the gospel is offered, should make use of his righteousness, and of the purchase made thereby, for this end, that they may have remission of sins and eternal life." For, not only is the security good, sufficient and sure in itself, the testament being confirmed; but he is (to speak so with reverence) passionately desirous that sinners should endeavour on good ground to be sure of it in themselves; therefore he kindly puts it in a legacy, makes serious offer of it, and strongly confirms it to all that embrace it.

SEVENTHLY, Observe, "That 'tis to testify this his willingness that sinners should make use of his purchase, and lay hold on his righteousness, on remission of sins and life thro' him, and to promote the acceptance thereof among sinners, that he hath instituted this ordinance of the Communion." "Take ye, eat ye," &c. For this is (as if he had said) the end of the institution of this sacrament, and the reason of it, even to be a sign and seal of confirmation to many, of the remission of sins, thro' my blood: This was my design in laying down my life, to get many sinners pardoned; and this is the end of the institution of this precious ordinance of my Supper, to apply it to them, and to confirm them in the faith of it.

EIGHTHLY, Observe, "That they who would partake aright of this Sacrament for their confirmation as to the pardon of their sins, and their sharing in the rest of the benefits of Christ's purchase, would first close with Christ in the covenant, and make that the way of their making

" use of this sacrament, to confirm the bargain : " There- fore is it called ' The cup of the new covenant in his blood.' This is the *SINE QUO NON*, even closing with Christ in a covenant; else the sacrament can do no good: It is the great thing that admits sinners to have right and access to Christ's purchase; the writing must first be subscribed, and then sealed; the bargain made, and then confirmed.

NINTHLY, Observe, " That they who have the offer " of the gospel, and are admitted to the sacrament of the " Lord's supper, would be so present, serious, and every " way in a posture suitable to that action, as if they were " never to have the offer or occasion of another Communion. As the Lord saith to Elijah the prophet, " Arise, eat, for thou hast a long journey to go: " so saith the Lord to the disciples, and in them to us, " Henceforth I will drink no more of the fruit of the vine, till I drink it new with you in the kingdom of my Father: " Ye will get no more Communion with me here, and therefore go rightly about this; improve it well, and let a foundation be laid here of a solid standing interest in me, that ye may be ready to meet with the trials that are coming.

TENTHLY, Observe, " That sinners, who receive " Jesus Christ on the terms he is offered in the gospel, and " take the sacrament for a confirmation of their interest in " him and in his purchase, tho' they should never have " another Communion in this world, may confidently ex- " pect a joyful one in heaven." I tell you (saith he) for your consolation, Tho' I drink no more of the fruit of the vine with you here, yet the time cometh, when ye and I shall drink it new in the kingdom of my Father.

ELEVENTHLY, Observe, " That honest communicants, " sensible of sin, and content to take Christ on his own " terms, are called to be cheerful, and to cheer themselves " in the lively hope and expectation of heaven: " And a believer, tho' a sinner, that takes this way, should take his communion as a seal and pledge, confirming him in the faith and hope of his being ere long to have an eternal and uninterrupted communion with Christ in glory.

In these Observations we have a short hint of the treasure that believers have in Christ; and from them ye may gather, what a full Christ, a full covenant, and good bargain ye have, who have really closed with him: Ye

have a more liberal and richly bountiful Mediator, who hath put all these great things and many more into his testament to sinners, offered to them in the gospel, and sealed in the sacrament of his supper, to all them that take him, and rest satisfied with him; for which satisfaction there is all the reason in the world.

And therefore, to come, in particular Application, to the use of all: There is here good and large ground to speak a little to these Three. 1. To bring forth to you the good news of salvation thro' Christ. 2. To Exhort and press you to embrace and accept of them with gladness of heart, to make welcome "this faithful saying, worthy of all acceptance, that Christ came into the world to save sinners." 3. To comfort and solace sinners, that have betaken themselves to Christ, in the abundant consolation of this covenant, and in the administration of it, and in the Mediator the great Subject and Substance of it. And seeing it may be well said here, "Who is sufficient for these things?" ye would have an eye to him, who can make this gospel to favour sweetly, and even triumph: The commission to preach it is his; the ordinance and institution is his: And if there be any appetite for your food amongst you, any sense of sin, and desire of communion with him in heaven hereafter: Look, O look up to him, and beseech him to breathe on his own ordinance, and to back this word with life and power.

The FIRST Use then serves to bring forth to you this day the good news of salvation thro' Jesus Christ. O sinners, by this gospel and testament of Christ, and by the administration of this Ordinance, we have good news to tell you; "This is the new testament in his blood, which is shed for the remission of the sins of many." I shall endeavour to hold forth to you the goodness and gladness of these news and tidings, in these Three: And would to God we had sensible sinners to believe, receive and welcome them! 1. That there is a good bargain thro' Christ to be gotten by sinners. 2. That sinners, by accepting of Christ, have sufficient warrant and good security for applying to themselves and making use of this good bargain. 3. That Christ is most willing and desirous that sinners should close with this bargain, and make use of him and of his righte-

ousness for attaining the pardon of sin, and for making themselves happy everlastingly.

For the **FIRST**: Sinners, here is a good bargain to you thro' Christ, glad tidings of great happiness: "Fear not (saith the angel to the shepherds, Luke ii. 10, 11.) behold, I bring you glad tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people; for unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord:" Yea, we have these good news to preach to-day, Behold, to us hath died a Saviour, and he hath made his testament, and hath left a most ample, rich, comfortable and blessed legacy; and is not this a good and full bargain? Which will be clear, if ye consider, 1. The real worth of it: Is there any thing a sinner can stand in need of, but 'tis here; or any ill that a sinner can be under, but there is here a remedy for it? Is it the sense of sin, fear of justice, felt wrath, the apprehension of hell? Here are glad tidings, "Remission of sins by the blood of Christ;" this is the one express article of the testament here: We tell you, sinners, there is a Saviour whose life hath gone for sin, and there is a free absolution to be had, by virtue of his blood, to all who will lay hold on it. 2. Ye have the covenant to make it sure, and "remission of sins," is particularly mentioned in it for your satisfaction: Nay, look whatever further is in the covenant, and ye have it also upon your closing with Christ: "According to his divine power he hath (saith the apostle, 2 Pet. i. 3.) given unto us all things that pertain to life and godliness." And, ver. 4. "Exceeding great and precious promises are given us," promises of justification and sanctification. What a bundle of promises have we, Ezek. xxxvi. "I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and wash you from all your uncleanness, and from all your idols will I cleanse you, and will cause you to walk in my statutes, and do them," &c. There are promises of subduing of the body of death, of circumcising the heart, of causing to love God, of putting his fear in the heart, of healing backslidings. These and many more are articles of this testament, which, as they are very comforting, so are they very frequent and abundant in the covenant: This word of God is, as it were, the Index and Catalogue of them; and, in effect, there is not a promise in the word of God, but it is here. 3. There is yet something more; and that is, the Promiser himself is left in

legacy, which no other testator doth: "This is my body (saith he) that was broken for you: Open your mouth wide, and I will fill it: I will be thy God:" That is the comprehensive article of the covenant, and the great Gift, the Gift of gifts; and we may very safely say, that, as "He could not swear by a greater than himself," so he could not give a greater gift than himself. Would God there were suitable conceptions and apprehensions of this non-such Gift; and that He, "in whom the fulness of the Godhead dwells bodily," were looked upon as being thus in our offer, and were cordially closed with by faith! That's a great word, which we have, Rev. xx. 7. "He that overcometh shall inherit all things:" And how is it performed and fulfilled? "I will be his God:" this is all, and without this there is nothing. 4. Having this Gift, is there any thing that can be added? the text says, Heaven: Not that heaven is more than Christ, but this is it, that Christ enjoyed in heaven, is more than Christ enjoyed here on earth: "I will drink it new with you (saith he) in my Father's kingdom." The flood-gates are there (as it were) opened; and the heart enlarged and made capacious to let in the fulness of God, to the filling of the glorified believer even to the very brim; therefore is communion with Christ said to be new in heaven. We may have Christ here, and believers have him; but this is an addition, when we have our Husband not only in right, but have access immediately and most intimately to converse with him, and he to converse with us, when "the Queen shall be brought unto the King in raiment of needle-work, and taken into the King's palace with gladness and with joy, and the virgins her companions with her:" when there shall be a putting of unbelief to shame and an eternal banishment of it, and a compleating of believers satisfaction: The eye of the most profoundly exercised and experienced believers never saw, their ear never heard, neither were they ever able to conceive the thousandth part of these abundant consolations and heart-ravishing joys, that shall flow from the presence of the Lamb and of him that sitteth on the throne, when there shall be no intervening ordinances nor temple in that higher house, but "the Lamb shall be the light thereof;" and yet all this is offered to sinners, and put in Christ's testament to them, to the end it may be

made sure. And, lastly, As all these other things do concur, to make out the excellency of the bargain; so doth this in a special manner, that the price is paid, that they have nothing nothing to lay down, but may come and take all freely, without money and without price.

SECONDLY, For furthering and strengthening the consolation, ye would consider, that the believer who receives Christ as he is offered in the gospel, tho' he be a sinner, yet he hath a most sufficient, excellent and unquestionable security for, and right unto all these good things that our dying Lord Jesus hath comprehended in his testament. Believing sinners, what security would ye have? Ye have Christ's word, "I say unto you," &c. Ye have Christ's covenant and testament, "This is the cup of the new testament in my Blood:" and now the testament is confirmed and sealed, so that neither man nor angel can annul nor alter it. Our Lord's testament being sealed, it stands legally registrated in the court-books of heaven, and it stands legal on these terms, that a sinner who takes with his sin, disclaims his own righteousness, and betakes himself to Christ's righteousness, putting it in the room of his own, for his justification before God, may be sure of Christ's legacy and of heaven: As 'tis sure, that Christ suffered, and instituted this sacrament for his confirmation in the faith of it; the accepting of Christ, the submitting to his righteousness, the yielding to the covenant, and closing with him on his own terms, gives him a right to heaven and all the riches contained in his testament. To make out this, as being the very thing of the comfortable application of all that hath been said, and of what we are further to say; I shall offer these Four grounds; The First whereof is, some clear scriptures, that hold forth so much, viz. That as really they shall have life who take Christ and his offer, and close with him; as he really suffered and satisfied the justice of God for their sins. The first of these scriptures is, Heb. vii. 24. "Wherefore he is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him:" He is an able Saviour, able to the uttermost; and there is not a point of latitude, longitude or altitude beyond the uttermost: He is able to save them all; and what all? All that will come and make use of him, and give him the credit of his offices; all that will "come unto God by him." A second

is, Rom. v. 20. where the Apostle out-reasons sin, for holding forth the triumph of free grace: "Where sin abounded (saith he) grace did much more abound; that as sin hath reigned unto death, even so (and indeed it is an excellent So) might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord." Tho' we would endeavour to our utmost to unfold these words, we would not unfold all that is infolded in them: Did sin make sinners liable to death, and triumph over them? So grace hath erected a throne, by Christ's righteousness, not by inherent holiness, and hath triumphed over sin. The way how grace gives out its orders, and obtains its end, is not by our righteousness, but by the righteousness of Christ, thro' faith in him: Justice (to speak with reverence) is off the throne, and grace orders and sways all, in making application of Christ's purchased righteousness to believers. The Third Scripture is, Acts xiii: 38. "Be it known unto you, therefore, men and brethren, that through this Man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins;" and ver. 26. "To you is the word of this salvation sent." O glad tidings to the greatest sinners! "Through the Man CHRIST is preached to you remission of sins; and by him all that believe are justified from all things from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses." What are ye owing? or, what can the law, justice or Satan claim? Ye are justified from all these things. And when he speaks thus to despisers with a "Be it known unto you," that the offer is made to them, we may on good ground turn it over to you, and say, "Be it known unto you, that through Christ Jesus ye may have remission of sins, and be justified from all things from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses," according to the terms of the covenant: Let your libel be as long as it will; grace is on the throne, and will receive you. 2. Consider, that the great design which the Lord drives in the business of redemption, and publishing of it in the gospel, is, that remission of sins and life may be made sure to lost sinners that come to Christ: Why, I pray, was the covenant made? was it not for this end? as it is, Heb. viii. "This is my covenant (saith the Lord) that I will make with the house of Israel, I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and iniquities will I remember no more." No more! O sweet sound!

What is the design of the Mediator in his suffering? Is it not this? So, John x. 10. "I am come, that they might have life, and have it more abundantly:" and John xvii. "For their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also may be sanctified:" and here, "the new covenant in his blood is for the remission of the sins of many:" And this being the mean for attaining the end, it is impossible that it can misgive or fail. 3dly, Consider the contrivance of the covenant, and ye will see that it is impossible it can fail; heaven and earth shall sooner fail, than one tittle of this sworn and confirmed covenant: It cannot fail on the Mediator's side, for he hath paid the price already; neither can it fail on JEHOVAH's side, he will not fail to make application of grace to sinners, nor be unfaithful to the faithful Mediator: And since, upon the one side, justice had access to exact of Christ the full price, even to the least farthing, by virtue of the covenant of redemption, when he became Surety; will not the same covenant, on the other side, make it out, that grace shall have as good access to pardon the sinner, for whom he undertook? "For he (saith the apostle, 2 Cor. v.) was made sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." If the covenant (which is one) hath had the designed effect in and on the Mediator, as to his fulfilling all that was undertaken by him therein; shall not the promises made to him, as namely these, Isa. liii. 10, 11. "He shall see his seed, The pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand, By his knowledge shall my righteous Servant justify many," take effect and be fulfilled? Doubtless they will most certainly and infustrably. 4thly, Consider the great experience which the saints have had of the truth of this in all ages: Are there any this day before the throne, blessing the Lamb and him that sits thereon, or any that are on their way thitherward, but they are so many witnesses of this truth, that closing with Christ hath good security for remission of sins, and for eternal life? There shall never be one who shall have it to say, I trusted to this security, and it failed me: And hereupon riseth the sweet song, "Worthy is the Lamb to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing," Rev. v. 12. Nay, even those in the pit shall bear witness to this truth; for (saith the apostle, 2 Cor.

iii. 15.) "We are unto God a sweet savour in them that are saved, and in them that perish; to the one we are the savour of death unto death; and to the other, the savour of life unto life." And in the preceeding words he saith, "Thanks be to God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ." He maketh the triumph of the faithful ministers of the gospel, some way, to be in them that are damned, by his taking vengeance on them, for despising his grace offered; and they are made to see, that it was a sure bargain to them that thro' grace embraced it. And if this be so good a bargain to them that embrace it, and so very sick and sure, what, I pray, are we seeking, but that this good bargain and the sufficient security thereof may be taken hold on, as it is proposed? Alter not the terms of it; and indeed it would be very unreasonable to presume to do so, or so much as to desire an alteration of them; for, tho' we had them at our own contriving, we could never, by very far, contrive them so well: Nay, let me say, if angels were preaching to you, they would think it a privilege to have access to mention his precious name. Now, seeing it is the great design of the gospel to have sinners closing with Christ on his own terms, O do not frustrate the grace of God: And seeing grace makes offer of life and of remission of sins to sinners, to save them freely; let grace get such sinners to save as 'tis seeking, and it shall be a bargain.

THIRDLY, To prosecute this yet a little further: Ye would consider, that, as there is a good bargain to be had thro' Christ and by faith in him, and as there is good security for it; so it is our Lord's delight and good pleasure, and he is very desirous that sinners should make application of it by faith, receive and rest on him and his righteousness, for making themselves eternally happy. We are not speaking of such a happiness and security, that the Lord will be angry at you if ye take hold of it; but of a happiness and security that he is seriously willing ye should receive: And he doth most earnestly beseech you to take hold of this covenant on these sweet and easy terms, that ye be heartily content and well pleased with it. O sensible sinners, do ye indeed believe this, when we preach to you, that our Lord Jesus is as desirous to have you saved, as ye are; and that his righteousness be closed with, as ye are to have it? Nay, more, that there was never a soul more hungry and greedy (when

with a heart chock-full of desires after it) to communicate, than he is seriously willing to admit such a soul to communion with him? Then, as ye would do him a pleasure, (and 'tis all that ye can do) keep not at distance, but step to, and take what he offers; not only the sacrament, but himself in it, for your Head, Husband and Lord. And, that ye may not fear, stand, nor halt, to do so; consider, that there is not only a warrant to come, but that he calleth you to come, and is ready heartily to welcome you: Come on his call, and his call is no less broad than the call of the gospel; there is a warrant given you, on your hearing of the gospel, and quitting of your own righteousness, to receive Christ and his righteousness, and to admit of him to the exercise of his offices about you according to the covenant: And indeed we know not a truth of the gospel that hath more confirmations than this hath, viz. That Christ the Mediator is very willing and desirous that sinners close with him, and get the good of his purchase. For the making out of which, take these following considerations: (1.) What is the great design of the covenant, but this? as we have it, Isa. lxi. 1, 2, 3. "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach good tidings to the meek: He hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, to give to them that mourn beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness:" And this is called "the proclaiming of the acceptable year of the Lord;" wherein all the three Persons of the blessed Trinity concur, as is clear, ver. 1. Consider, (2.) All his offices, and ye will find that they preach and proclaim the same thing: His Name is JESUS, because "he saves his people from their sins:" He is King, Priest and Prophet, for this end. And what saith his preaching and correspondent prayer, John xvii. "Father, I will, that they whom thou hast given me, be with me," but that he would fain have them there? And what shall I say? Is there any proof of it that can be given beyond his death? "I lay down my life (saith he) for my sheep:" The salvation of lost elect sinners went very near his heart; therefore when none in heaven nor on earth can help, then saith he, "Lo, I come to do thy will, O my God." (3.) Consider, with what pleasure and delight he went

about the work of redemption; as is very clear in that 40th Psalm, where he heartily saith, "Lo, I come, I delight to do thy will;" I even hasten to undertake it: And, when he is come, he saith, John iv. 34. "It is my meat, to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work." And what work was that? Even to lay down his life; to gather the lost sheep of the house of Israel; to take away the feud that was betwixt God and them, and to reconcile them to him: And, when it cometh to the very push of actual laying down his life, he will not open his mouth to divert it; tho' he might have commanded more than twelve legions of angels, yet he would not do it: "For this cause (saith he) came I into this world."

(4.) Consider the end of all the ordinances: Wherefore are they instituted? What saith the word, but that, "Through this Man is preached unto you forgiveness of sins?" What say ministers, but that, "We are ambassadors in Christ's stead, beseeching you to be reconciled unto God?" which evidenceth plainly, that Christ would, fain (to speak so) have peace made betwixt God and sinners, and them saved: And what saith the Sacrament, but even the words of the text, "This is the new covenant in my blood shed for the remission of the sins of many?" And can we think on the end of these ordinances, but we must also think on Christ's willingness that sinners should make application of him and of his purchase? (5) Consider further, how he esteems a sinner's coming to him: "There is (saith he) joy in heaven at the conversion of a sinner:" We may say, that it is the gladness of his heart, when any sinner cometh home to him; therefore it is said, that "the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand; and he shall see of the travail of his soul and be satisfied," Isa. liii. 10. 11. It is satisfaction to him for all the travail of his soul, to see sinners coming in and getting good of him: And, in the Song, He is said "to feed in the gardens, and to be gathering lilies;" yea, that the day of souls being "espoused to him, is the day of the gladness of his heart." (6.) Consider, how weighted (to speak so, with reverence to him) our Lord is, when sinners will not make use of him; 'tis accounted by him, as it were, an affronting of him, even a "treading of the blood of the covenant under foot, and an ac-

counting of it to be an unholy thing," a sort and degree of "doing despite to the Spirit of grace:" He who could look sometimes on the wrath of God, and not shed a tear, yet, when he came to Jerusalem, "wept over it." And, upon the other hand, O what complacency hath he in a sinner's coming home to him, which makes him sweetly smile and rejoice! (7.) Consider his exceeding great forbearance toward sinners while they are straying, and his exceeding hearty welcoming of them when they return. Let an inquest (to say so) be led on his procedure with all the hearers of the gospel that are here on earth, and with all that are in heaven and hell, and all of them will be constrained to subscribe to the truth of this, that he is full of long-suffering: Doth he not spare even the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction? and doth he not only spare his own, but pity them as a father pitieth his children? And that wonderful welcome of the father to his prodigal son, is nothing to Christ's welcoming of a repenting sinner, being but a dark resemblance of it; he casts not up to him his bygone faults, neither says, What is this you have done, miserable wretch? No such word; but, "This is my son that was dead, and is alive; that was lost, and now is found:" Believe it, O believe it, (which is the very scope of the parable) our Lord Jesus is as glad in a holy way at a sinner's coming home. (8.) Consider, how easy our Lord is to be pleased with any honest mint or essay that is made of returning to him: He is so very willing that a sinner make application of his righteousness, that, where there is reality, he will (as it were) take half a faith for faith, were it even but like "a smoking flax, or bruised reed, or a grain of mustard seed:" He will take a sincere resolution to confess, for the confession of sin; which is clear, Psal. xxxii. "I said (saith David) I will confess my transgression, and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin." If he had proposed the offer of life on such terms as would have wearied us all our days, we ought to have judged him willing that we should partake of it, for it cost him very dear: But when it is not Abraham's faith only, but any faith, how weak soever, if sound, that he graciously accepts: how doth it set forth his great willingness? "Him that cometh to me, (saith he) I will in nowise cast out:" The word is doubled in the original, "I will not, Not;" to shew the

holy passionateness of our Lord's desire, and his exceeding great willingness to have sinners closing with him. So, Isa. xlv. Salvation is promised even to a Look, "Look unto me all the ends of the earth, and be saved:" And, if sinners cannot well look, think but honestly, and let their heart yield, and it shall be a bargain: "He that is athirst, let him come," Rev. xxii. And, if there be scarce the pain of hunger or thirst; "The Spirit and the Bride say, Come; and whosoever will, let him come, and take of the water of life freely;" and this willingness is nothing else, but the thought and desire of an heart consenting to accept of his offer. Or, if this be not little enough, there is less yet, Psal. xxxvii. 7. "Rest in the Lord:" the word (as it is on the margent and Psal. lxii. 1.) is, 'Be silent to the Lord:' If the heart cannot so well and distinctly say Amen to the bargain, let it (as it were) hold its tongue, or hold its peace; let it be silent, say nothing against it, or give a silent quiet answer, or, by way of approbation and acceptance, keep silence; and it shall be accepted: O wonderful stooping! doth not this declare and manifestly preach the exceeding great willingness that our sweet Lord Jesus hath to communicate and apply his purchase to sinners? (9.) Consider the persons on whom he confers the offer, and the manner how he prosecutes it; and it may yet further hold forth, how seriously willing he is that sinners should welcome it, and be made up by it: Who, I pray, are called, Luke xiv 21. 'Tis "the poor, the blind, the maimed, the halt, the lame," &c. And are there any that can say, they are worse? If thou say, I can do nothing, I am maimed and cannot come; the gospel bids call the cripple, and provides him "a chariot of the wood of Lebanon, paved with love," and having (to speak so) all the seats and cushions of it of love, Cant. iii. 10. and giveth stilts or crutches of grace to under-prop, and eagles wings to carry them. If thou be a confused body, and wot'st not what to do, it bids call the blind: If thou be poor, blind, miserable, wretched and naked; and yet having conceited and fancied that thou wast rich, thou art not excluded for all that: for, Rev. iii. 18. Laodicea consists of a hypocritical pack, and company of lukewarm professors, who are so lothsom to Christ, that he threatens to spew

them out of his mouth; and yet to such, even to such he saith, "I counsel thee to buy of me," &c. And, if these be invited, who can exempt or exclude themselves from the offer or bargain? Do not these things most convincingly and irrefragably demonstrate his willingness, when there is not a sinner that is either poor, proud, vain, hypocritical, &c. but he is included in the call of the gospel? (10.) Consider his urgency and pressingness in making and bearing home the offer: O how long-suffering is he! and with what patience doth he wait on! 'Tis not an ambassage that's broken up if it be not presently closed with, as a hasty man doth; but, "All the day have I stretched out my hands to a gain-saying people," Isa. lxxv. "Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often would I have gathered thee!" &c. Matth. xxiii. How doth wisdom stand and press her invitation, Prov i 20. and viii. 1, 2, &c. Ezek. xviii. 31, 32. "Turn ye at my rebuke, why will ye die?" Luke xiv. 23. "Go to the high-ways, and compel them to come in." 1 John iii. 23. "This is his commandment, that ye believe on the name of the Son of God." 'Tis not left as an indifferent thing at sinners option, to do or not do; but the same authority that enjoins keeping the sabbath, and that forbids cursing and swearing, doth lay on this command of believing: "Come to the wedding, believe, man and woman, and be saved:" And what is all this to the bowels of mercy, grace, and love that are in him? "His belly is like ivory, overlaid with sapphires: His face is white and ruddy," a part whereof this is; and yet 'tis nothing (to speak so) to the principal copy, which is his heart; that's a great depth, even the very centre and element (as it were) of love. "God is love," (saith John) as if he were nothing else but love: And what a love must it be, where he is (to speak so) turned into love in the person of Christ? Angels cannot to the full consider of it, nor conceive it; your hearts cannot reach it. Sure there is much, wonderfully much ground here to lay it for an undoubted truth, that our Lord Jesus is exceedingly desirous of the salvation of sinners, and of many sinners, and is in a great readiness to make his righteousness forth-coming to them, and heartily to welcome all that come to him.

The Second Use is of Exhortation: And ye may at first blush to see whither it runs, even to stir us up to accept of,

and embrace these good news with glad hearts. Is there here a good bargain, and a sure way through faith to make use of it? and is Christ so willing to communicate it? What shall I say to you! is it not a pity to miss it? Nay, would ye do Christ a pleasure? then lay weight on his righteousness, and give him sinful souls to be saved by him. If we sought great or hard things from you, to please him, would you not judge yourselves obliged to grant them? But when he saith on the matter, Give me your souls to be saved, and I shall account that satisfaction to me for all the travel of my soul: O how unspeakably great is your obligation, readily and cheerfully to grant so loving and reasonable a request? If such a gracious offer had never been made, it would have been, "Men and Brethren, what shall we do?" and there would have been a mighty great scarring and trembling to draw near: But when it is not to the "mount that cannot be touched," not to Moses that we are called to come, but to a Saviour, whom ye cannot please better than (nay not at all, but) by receiving of him, and whom in some respect ye cannot displease at all, if ye receive him; let me beseech and obtest you, as ye would not be found guilty of treading this blood of the covenant under foot, and as ye would not for ever debar yourselves from remission of sins with him, make use, O make use of this propitiation for sin, and for procuring your pardon and peace. Would to God this were the fruit of such a day's work! for indeed 'tis our great work, and the very scope of all our preaching: And, behold, I proclaim to you, that remission of sins is to be had thro' his blood, and that there shall not be any upbraiding of you, nor casting up of bygones, if ye will indeed receive him, and close with him, on his own sweet, easy and very reasonable terms: O then sit not this urgent call, and the day of your merciful visitation.

And, to press this Exhortation a little, Consider, that grace hath a throne and shall triumph in this gospel, either in your gaining, or in being avenged upon you for your despising of its richest and freest offers. Let us, I pray, reason the matter with you a little? And, 1. Are there not sinners here? There is not a design in this gospel to save any others but sinners; and, if so, "to you is this

salvation sent," who by nature are sinners, enemies, and at feud with God: The doctrine of this gospel carries in its bolom remission of sins. Would to God ye were suitably affected with sin, and judging yourselves, that so ye might be in some capacity to receive it. 2. Tell me, what is it that ye would be at? Is it remission of sins? 'tis here: Would ye have the covenant and promises? here they are: Is it Christ himself that ye would have, because ye dare not trust to a promise without a Cautioner? here he is: Or would ye have heaven, and be eternally happy? 'tis also here. Consider then, I beseech you, what is in your offer: Dare you say, that the security is not valid, good and sufficient? And, if ye should, there are many witnesses in heaven against you, and also the sacrament on earth, which now is offered to confirm you. This bargain, therefore, and its security must be received, or else wo unto you for ever: This word which we now preach, nay, these stones shall bear witness against you, that our Lord Jesus was willing to save you and every one of you, and ye would not; and therefore your blood shall be required at your own hand, and be found without any the least culpable accession to it. 3. Ye are either to communicate to-day, or ye are only to be hearers and spectators: Whether the one or the other, is there not a necessity that ye close this bargain? If ye be to communicate, will ye take the bread and wine, and misken and slight Christ? If so, ye will eat and drink your own damnation. Would you have the character of a right communicant? This is it, that ye renounce your own, and trust to his righteousness, and take the sacrament for a confirmation of your interest in it: If ye come thus, ye shall be welcome; for this ordinance is appointed for this very end. If ye be not to communicate, this word of the gospel comes to you, tho' ye have secluded yourselves from the sacrament either thro' ignorance or scandal: It might be a sweet communion to you, if yet Christ get a welcome: and it should, I assure you in his name, make way to a new communion here or in heaven. But, 4. I would a little more particularly beseech you to consider, that ye must either give Christ a welcome or not, a yea or a nay-say, a grant or a denial; for there is no mean or middle: This day shall not pass and go by without a hit or a miss (to speak so) Christ will not

knock at your door, and nothing follow or be done: It will either be, that Christ was at such a time (ruzed or) commended, and made offer of, and his people would have none of him; or that the heart opened as the heart of Lydia unto the Lord, and that salvation came to the soul, as it did to Zaccheus his house. Your time is but short and uncertain, ye know not if ye shall come another sabbath to hear; some that now speak to you, and some that hear, are daily removed; And this bids you make haste to creep in to him quickly without longer delay, while his arms are stretched out to receive and embrace you. There are several sorts among you, that keep at a distance from Christ; but I would have all of you soberly to think, whether ye will say Yea, or Nay. There is here what may silence and satisfy any soul that thwarts with the call of God: Can ye say, that there is any better bargain, any better security, or any heartier call and invitation? "Let us come and reason together, saith the Lord, (Isa. i. 18, 19.) Though your sins be as crimson, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red as scarlet, they shall be as wool: If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land; but if ye refuse and rebel, ye shall be destroyed." Our Lord's blood is of that efficacy, that it can make crimson and scarlet-coloured sins, white, white as snow and wool: Why do ye then linger, stick, stand or halt?

Ye will, it may be, Object, and say, First, I would fain come, if I durst. But consider, I pray you, that 'tis Christ and the covenant, and grace on the throne that call you; and this is their voice, "Thou hast spoken and done evil as thou couldst, yet return unto me:" And therefore fear and tremble, yet come; fear, and bring your sins with you to the fountain to be washen, and to a skirt of his love to be covered thereby; and you shall on your coming be cleansed and covered. But it may be, ye will. next, Object and say, I would fain come, but I cannot come. For Answer, Let me ask you, Is there a soul in hell this day, that can say, I would fain have come, and could not come? That which we seek of you is, to make no long, tedious or toilsom voyage, if there be honesty: 'Tis only, that when Christ is come to you, ye will be willing to receive him; and, if ye thus come, ye are believers. Do not, I beseech you, mistake, in thinking (and thereby obstructing your

own coming) that persons must first be believers, and then come to Christ: No; but first ye must come with the little glimmering that ye have, and lame as ye are, and it will go with you; his chariot is waiting for you: And the very cripplest of you, that cannot come of yourselves to Christ, if ye be willing to close with him on his own terms, he shall come to you. But 'tis like, some will, in the Third place, Object and say, Alas! I am very indisposed to come. For Answer, I shall grant it may indeed be true; but yet consider who are invited, 'tis the "poor, blind, halt, maimed, wretched and miserable:" O what unfitness have such! and yet none of them are excepted against. I would have none to be presumptuous and vain; but, if indeed ye would fain come, ye cannot come so indisposed, as the bargain will on that account be cast: It will not be the want of a disposition that shall cast it, else the cripple and blind, and lukewarm Laodiceans had never been invited. Whether is a suitable disposition of your own making, or of Christ's? Sure 'tis of his; and can ye expect ought from him, without coming to him, or believing in him? But, Fourthly, Some will Object and say, Alas! I have often come, and broken away again; how can I then believe that I am invited? For Answer, I would desire you to consider whither that objection tends, even to question the truth of the gospel: Our Lord Jesus saith, "He came to save sinners;" and ye say, I would fain know if that be true or not. If ye be poor, blind, miserable, naked, &c. and have need, he commands us to invite and call such; and 'tis the way of unbelief to make them fear at Christ, and stand farthest aback from him, who have most need to draw near to him; If ye have come and broken afterward, come again; and, where a knot hath not holden, cast a new one. But, alas! there is a sort of careless atheists and secure hypocrites, whom this gospel strikes dead; and carnal worldlings, who have no serious thoughts of what is coming: I would pose such, and ask you, Care ye for your souls? care ye for remission of sins? or care ye for the enjoying of God? If ye do, then sure, it is unspeakably of your concernment to consider and close with the call and offer of this gospel: And if there be any of you, that have loved your idols, and after them will go, I would desire you in soberness to say to it, Will ye prefer any idol to Christ, the creature to the

Creator, the temporal sinful being of your body to the eternal well-being of both soul and body? If ye will, then be sure, that this conviction, in your judgment and conscience, will go along with such a cursed resolution, that Christ and heaven were the absolutely best bargain.

The Third Use serves to Cheer and Solace sinners, that have betaken themselves to Christ. O all ye who are glad to hear tell of such a Saviour, and whose heart is even now content to take him, and to renounce all idols for his sake; We have, 1. Remission of sins, not only to offer, but even to proclaim freely to you: "He that believes is past from death to life, and shall not come into condemnation: There is no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit," as it is, Rom. viii. 1. If ye say, What will become of the sins that we are now under the guilt of? I answer, They shall be freely forgiven: "In those days and at that time (saith the Lord by the prophet Jeremiah, Chap. 1. 20.) the iniquity of Israel shall be sought for, and there shall be none; and the sins of Judah, and they shall not be found: For I will pardon them whom I reserve." When all the books shall be cast open, there shall be nothing found to charge upon a believing elect; "'Tis God that justifieth, who shall condemn?" Sin is pardoned to you, as really as it was to Abraham and to David; and heaven is made as sure to you, as it was to them, who are now in it. Ye have the same Surety, the same Saviour, the same Covenant. 2. What promise would ye have? I know ye need many; but is there any of all the promises that is not in the covenant? Yea, ye have the covenant and Christ both, for "he is given for a covenant" to you. "All things are yours, (as it is, 1 Cor. iii.) whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life or death, or things present, or things to come, all are yours, and ye are Christ's:" ye have a title and right to all the promises, and may comfort yourselves in the assured hope of the performance of them. O that many were in capacity to receive this consolation! 3. There may be a wearisome time here, and who knows what trials and scatterings may overtake you, what times may go over you, ere ye get another communion? It were best then, that ye who seriously mind to cleave to Christ and his covenant, were making for them: And therefore lay up

this consolation, O believers, comfort yourselves in this blessed bargain; ye have Christ and remission of sins; take the sacrament as a seal thereof: There is a day coming, when ye will drink it new in the kingdom of heaven; O cheer yourselves in the hope of it, and for the time in this resemblance of it, when ye see a poor man personating our Lord Jesus Christ, and by his warrant offering him to you: The day is coming when there shall be no resemblance, no temple, no ministers, no ordinances, no sacrament; but ye shall drink of that new wine, the grapes whereof grow on Christ Jesus "the Tree of Life in the midst of the paradise of God;" even the wine of the consolation of glory, that will keep you in a continual holy ravishment; when all tears shall be wiped away, and ye shall have fully satisfying blessedness in the immediate vision and fruition of God: And, since it is so, "Let the joy of the Lord be your strength." There shall not a believer come to the Lord's table this day, but there is a day coming when he and she shall drink it new, without interruption eternally, in the kingdom of heaven: "Father (saith Christ, John xvii.) I will, that these whom thou hast given me, may be with me where I am; to behold my glory:" And again, "The glory which thou gavest me, I have given them:" And saith he, Rev. iii. 12. "I will write upon him my new name, and the name of the city of my God," &c. that is, the communication and participation of the glory of the Head, as the members are capable. Labour, O labour to have your appetites sharpened, and your longing desires quickened to taste of this new wine: It will be fresh, strong and sweet there. And, seeing the Lord allows you such consolation, take it, and take the sacrament as a pledge of it: And think with thyself, O believer in Christ, What! shall I, sinful and unworthy I, ere long sit with Christ at his table in glory? and is this a sign and representation of it under a vail? "What manner of person ought I to be in all holy conversation and godliness?" Ought I not to love him much, and 'to continue with him in all tentations?' The kingdom will superabundantly make up all: The very first draught of this new wine will make sighing and sorrow for ever to flee away. Let your souls be comforted in what ye have, and in the expectation of what is coming: There are great things coming; ye have a rich and liberal,

a free and frank Bestower, and notably good security. Come therefore all of you to the due use-making of the covenant, and of the sacrament in reference to this end: And the Lord himself, that calls you, enable you to come aright, that it may be a closed, sealed, and confirmed bargain betwixt him and you this day, that ye may have ground to say, "This is the day which the Lord hath made, we will be glad and rejoyce in it."



S E R M O N XIV.

A Thanksgiving-SERMON after the Communion, the last that ever the Author preached on such an Occasion, at GLASGOW,

ON MATTH. xxvi. 29.

But I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom.

OUR blessed Lord Jesus is now near taking leave of his apostles, and preparing them for the storm they were to meet with: And, for the consolation of them and of all his followers to the end of the world, he instituteth this ordinance of the Communion, to be his love-token in his absence; that all his people might be confident of his respect to them, as well as to those then present; and that all of them might thereby be put and kept in the remembrance of him till his coming again.

He hath given them a massy and marrowy sum of the gospel in the words immediately preceeding: "This cup

(saith he) is my Blood of the New Testament shed for the remission of the sins of many :” To which he subjoins, partly for warning, partly for consolation, these now read, “ But I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of the fruit of the vine, till I drink it new with you in my Father’s kingdom :” as if he had said, Tho’ now we be sitting here at the communion-table heartily together, I tell you, that I and ye will have no more communions here on earth: The particle **BUT** is to give them a watch-word ; and yet, according to his blessed manner and wont, he hath the best word hindmost, and tells them glad news on the back of it: For they might say, Wo’s us, sweet Master, will we never meet again at a Communion? Think not so, saith he; we shall yet meet again, and have a sweet Communion in heaven. This then is a very heartsom dismiss: Tho’ he sends them away, advertising them of a storm coming, and tho’ they knew not well what was before them; yet he heartens and encourages them with a promise, that they shall have this wine new, or the thing signified by it, with a far other relish, in glory; and that then he and they should have good days of it. I shall say no more to the exposition, scope, or division of the words: Take this one Doctrine from them, and then a few things on the connexion, for Use.

The great Doctrine then implied is this, “ That believers “ will have a sweet communion in Christ’s Father’s kingdom in heaven.” This is expressly in the text, and confirmed by other scriptures, as namely, Luke xxii. 29. “ Ye are they that have continued with me in my temptations, and I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me: That ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom.” This is that communion, even a partaking of Christ’s glory in his Father’s kingdom, and with him in it; and, John xvii. 22: “ The glory which thou gavest me, I have given them:” And, ver. 24. “ Father, I will, that they whom thou hast given me may be with me, to behold my glory which thou hast given me:” Which words set forth, not only the certainty of the thing, a glorious place and day, and the excellency of the feast, but also a sort of peremptoriness in reference thereto: “ Father, I will,” saith he. When he prayed that the cup might depart from him, he does it conditionally and with sub-

mission; but, when he prays for communion in glory to him and his followers, there is no submission (to speak so) because it was according to the covenant of redemption, and therefore he is absolute and holily peremptory in it; and the "Father hears him always:" So in the Epistles written to the seven Churches of Asia, Rev. ii. iii. it is promised by our Lord, to him that overcometh, that he "will give him the hidden manna, the white stone, and new name, to sit with him on his throne:" Let all believers on earth be gathered together, they cannot tell what this is, what a Manna, what a Communion this will be; it quite transcends all experience, all expression and conception: Only in the text it is called, 1. WINE, which is a very cordial thing; it is "Meat indeed, and Drink indeed." 2. It is called New Wine; we taste of it here, but it is new and hath another relish there. 3. It is in a sweet place, not in any earthly house or upper-chamber, not in a material temple made with hands, but in Christ's Father's kingdom, that New Jerusalem, that Tabernacle of God, where God dwelleth with angels and glorified saints; "the city paved with pure gold; the gates whereof are pearl; the foundations of the wall whereof are garnished with all manner of precious stones; which hath no sun, but the glory of God and of the Lamb is the light thereof." O believers, who have some of you but cote-houses, smoky holes here, ye shall have mansions of glory there, admirably good accommodation: It is with excellent and non-such company, even with Christ; for he says, that "He will drink this Wine new with us in his Father's kingdom. It is a great matter to get leave to sit down with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, David, and the prophets Elijah, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, and the rest of them, with John the Baptist, with Paul, John, Peter, and the other apostles, and with the whole congregation of the first-born; but it is more, to drink the new wine with Christ himself, in heaven, who is (to say so) the very HEART of heaven. This communion hath in it these Five notable qualifications. 1. It is immediate: All our communion here is mediate, ordinances and ministers intervene and come betwixt us and him, and there is need of faith in order to it; but, in that communion above, there is no intermediate mean, there we

shall see his face, as it is said, Rev. xxii. 3. there is no temple, no ministers, no preaching, no light of candle or sun there, but the Lamb and the Lord God, who enlightens it; the tabernacle of ordinances will then be taken down, every thing which is in part will be done away, when that which is perfect is come; "the Lord shall feed, and the Lamb shall lead us by these living waters." 2. There is in it a sharing of the same glory with the Mediator; he and we shall drink of one cup, sit at one table, and sit on one throne, Rev. iii. 21. We shall partake of Christ's glory: "I will (saith he, John xvii. 24.) that they behold my glory;" there we get eminently "the new name, and the name of the city of Christ's God," Rev. iii. there "his name will be in our foreheads," Rev. xxii. 4. "and our vile bodies will be made conformable to Christ's glorious body," Philip. iii. 21. Our spirits will be made pure as he is pure; when we shall be raised in incorruption, we shall bear the image of the heavenly Adam, and our bodies shall be made spiritual. It cannot be told what this will be, to be made partakers of Christ's glory, when the fulness of the Godhead shall be communicated to us objectively, and when God shall be All in all. 3. It is a communion satisfying completely; if Christ's communion be full, ours shall be full: In this communion none shall complain of desertion, none shall desire more of the Spirit, or more consolation; for it shall be full: Then shall we satisfyingly "know the love of Christ that passeth knowledge, and be filled with all the fulness of God." This water of life will satisfy to the full the greatest thirst of such as long for Christ; there shall not be (to speak so) an empty corner in the most capacious soul. Thou poor hungry and thirsty, empty and indigent believing soul shalt then be full, and kept full (according to creature-capacity) to the very brim; and thy heart, that is now narrow and straitned, shall be widened and enlarged then, to take in this sweet and satisfying wine; there shall not be one vessel in glory, but it shall be filled brimful with the new wine of these strong consolations of God, being dilated, capacitated, elevated and enlarged for that very end. 4. This communion is uninterrupted; there shall be nothing to mar it, no cross, no sin, no temptation to sin: For no unclean thing enters within the gates of the New Jerusalem; no curse, no cry in those streets, no weeping,

no sorrow, no sighing for any thing past, nor horror nor fear from the apprehension of any evil coming, nor any the least mis-tuning of the Lamb's song of praise; the heart shall (to speak so) be so stringed and bended, as it shall never again slack in its bent, but be still kept at its highest note; our harps shall never hang any more on the willows, but we shall keep them still in our hand, chanting the praises of the Redeemer to that new heavenly tune never heard on earth, with palms of victory in our hands, and crowns of glory on our heads, following the Lamb whithersoever he goes. 5. It is an eternal communion: We shall drink for ever with him, and be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of his house, and made hoily drunk "with the river of his pleasure, with whom is the fountain of life, and in whose light we shall eternally see light;" whose well of life is always running, "in whose presence is fulness of joys, and at his right hand pleasures for evermore." Tho' through all eternity thousands and millions will be drinking of this new wine, yet it shall never be the less, but is and shall be still fresh and flowing.

Now, for Application: Let me ask you, Do ye believe this, that there is such a day coming, and that these are the true and faithful sayings of God? O if ye all that hear me this day did indeed believe it! The belief of it, sure, is very suitable, and would make a very sweet life; ye will never be holy, ye will never aright fear nor love God, ye will never hate sin, nor be heartsom in his service, neither will ye be truly thankful, till ye really believe it. I am afraid, if atheists, earthly wretches, drunkards, tipplers, cursers, swearers, hypocrites, &c. were singled out and separated from among us, they would be found to be but a small number who believe this: Do ye or can ye believe it, that have your portion in this life, and seek no more? Nay, believers, if ye indeed believe it, why are you so heartless? why envy ye the poor prosperity of the men of the world? why do ye not press after this mark and prize? If ye believed it suitably, your hearts would laugh within you, your spirits would rejoice, your faces would some-way shine; and what is spoken of this day, would have a divine splendor and lustre in your eyes. If you believe it, why is it not your work and business to live so, as ye may hope

to drink of this cup of this new wine with Christ in heaven? Tho' ye should drink water all your days, this wine will abundantly compensate that; tho' now the bread of some of you be but brown, this feast of truly royal dainties is before you; our Christian friends, that are gone, are feeding sweetly on it. Long, O believers, to be with them; and take it not ill, tho' ye be here somewhat straitned and kept scarce, and have but a little portion, a small pittance and scant measure of the things of this world, when others fare well and sumptuously, live high, are gorgeously apparelled: Your feast and royal robes are before you. The rich and great men of this world, whose portion is in this life, care little for poor bodies that seek God: Care ye as little for their portion as they care for yours; they shall not, a little hence, get a drink, nay, not a drop of cold water, when ye shall drink this new wine, this royal wine in abundance: Christ's "servants shall eat, when they shall be hungry;" his servants "shall drink, when they shall be thirsty; they shall sing for joy of heart, when the others shall mourn and howl for vexation of spirit:" as it is, Isa. lxxv. 13. O seek after clearness of interest in him, that ye may thoroughly believe, love, and long for this life. This heartsom communion with Christ in heaven is reserved for them that keep communion with him here on earth, and to them it is here promised: I will not say, that none can get heaven, but those who get the sacrament; but this I dare boldly say, that those who have not communion with Christ here, shall never get communion with him hereafter; and whoever communicate honestly here, shall have communion with Christ in glory. Be ye comforted who believe in Christ, who covenant honestly with him, and who hope in his mercy; for he and ye together shall have a compleatly full, immediate, uninterrupted and eternal communion in heaven, that shall never end. Need ye to be confirmed in the truth of this? his word may serve you, and ye have the sacrament beside: He hath left his word to hearten poor believers under all their inward and outward troubles, under their spiritual maladies and bodily sicknesses and infirmities, and to assure them for their comfort that there is a good life coming, and he hath given the sacrament as a pledge of it: Will ye then consider seriously, whether this word belong to you, and if ye may with his allowance hearten yourselves

from it, that there is a day coming that ye shall get communion with Christ in heaven. He doth not mean, that all that get the sacrament, get this communion; for Judas, who not improbably got the sacrament is excluded. Would ye know then, who have been honest communicants to-day, that may expect this heavenly communion? And methinks, that every one of you, that hath any serious concern for your souls, will be roused here, and greedily longing for marks and evidences of it. But, if any of you would be at evidences to make you secure, I declare I have none such to give you: But I shall hint at Two or Three, which may be as directions in duty to you who mind honestly: The First whereof is, Luke xxii. 29. "Ye are they that have continued with me in my temptation, and I appoint unto you a kingdom" Here it is clear, that these Two go together, viz continuing with Christ in his temptations, and coming to his kingdom. In a word, it is not to be religious for the fashion, but in earnest; it is not to be religious for a day or two, or in some trials only, but to continue in it, and with him in his temptations, whatever they be; not only to be religious when religion is countenanced, but when it is discountenanced, and persecution is met with for its sake, and when there are many snares and temptations to draw you away; 'tis a stedfast abiding with Christ in trying times, summer and winter, so to say: If a blast of trial and temptation come, and ye grow giddy and wavering in the truth, or if a spirit of profanity come (and look for it, and lay your account with it) and ye be ready to laugh and give in your taunt, gybe, and mock with the profane, against the power of godliness and the godly; away with your religion, it is not a continuing with Christ in his temptations. This mark puts you to work, (and such marks are safest) "To him that overcometh," is a word often repeated, Rev. ii. 3. and set always before you the promise of glory and communion with Christ in heaven; on such, and on such only, will Christ "write his new name, and set them on his throne." A Second mark is, Ye that do indeed keep communion with Christ here, and war against your lusts, without any allowed peace, truce or cessation of arms, till ye get them brought down, routed and ruined by an entire victory, shall partake of this communion in

glory : If ye do not deliberately give up with Christ to keep company with idols, ye may have hope ; but the unbelieving and fearful, that cannot endure to look a lust nor a trial for Christ in the face, and who, it may be, are just now wearying of such a day and sermon, and it is even as a prison to them to be restrained so long from worldly business and pleasures, are utterly excluded from all hope, while they remain such. Serious souls will, belike, here say, We are fighting but we come not speed. I answer, Let not that discourage you, if there be no hope to come speed in end ; continue in the fight, and you shall come speed : Christ is thy Captain, and a Captain of salvation, at whose back none fell so as not to arise. A Third mark is, John xvii. 6. 7. 8. where Christ is praying for the disciples, that they may be admitted to this communion ; and saith he, “ I gave them the words which thou gavest me, and they have received them.” The believer receives Christ’s words and keeps them, and makes exception against none of them ; when he takes one word, he casts not at another ; he takes not one piece of the covenant of grace, and rejects another ; but universally he approves and accepts of all Christ’s words, and more particularly, and in a special manner, of the command of believing. Thus speaks the Psalmist, Psal. cxix. 128 “ I esteem all thy commandments concerning all things to be right :” So saith Christ of the disciples. “ I have given them thy words, and they have received them :” and particularly (as if he had said) I proposed a special suit to them, that they would be friends with thee, and be reconciled to thee through faith in me ; and they received that word : “ Therefore glorify them.” Ye may possibly think these marks difficult ; but, would you have a religion that will put you to no pains ? Such marks are high and hard indeed to flesh and blood, and to your lusts ; but, what loss is in mortifying these ? Is it any prejudice to you to receive Christ’s words, and to keep them, and to follow him in his temptations, when an hundred fold more than ye can lose is to be gotten by so doing ? And therefore we declare to you from the word of the Lord, if ye resolve not to live as having on you the wedding-garment, we cannot say that ye shall eat and drink with Christ at his table in his kingdom.

In the Next place, According to the method proposed, ye would consider the connexion, and how this purpose comes in; even thus, as if the Lord had said, Ye have now an excellent communion-day; but ye and I will have no more together in this world: Whence observe, "That the best communion-day that God's people have here, hath a BUT in it, or something that makes it appear defective:" only in that communion in heaven there is no BUT, no defect: And it implies, 1. His saying to them, Ye have now been at the communion, but ere long ye shall meet with temptation and trouble; and as he said, so within a very little it came to pass. So may I say, We are here now, but do we know how soon a temptation may assault and prevail? The tempter is waiting on, and hath, it is like, given in his petition for a permission to essay such and such a person, by some suitable temptation, ere to-morrow; and he offers, it may be, to make his hypocrisy to be discovered: And it will be a sad matter, if any of you stumble and be overtaken with the temptation. 2. It looks to the scattering that was coming: We will not (as if he had said) be all together at the communion again; "for it is written, I will smite the Shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered." It is more than probable that we shall not all drink and eat at one table again: Are there not some both ministers and people dead and gone since the last communion? And ye may want some of both, ere ye get another; and may there not some sad division, trouble or confusion arise, to the offending of some, and laying of them aside? Nay, some may be offended at these same ordinances; Satan hath many ways to break in upon us: Nay, let me tell you, that a cloud of persecution may come and cover us, that we shall not dare to come, or may scruple to come to such an ordinance, tho' we be now dawted and (as it were) dandled on his knee. 3. It may look to their being deprived of Christ's company and bodily presence. And who knoweth, but there may be a cloud of desertion on ordinances, and a vailing of Christ's presence? I forewarn you, that it is to be feared; which says, we should keep him well while we have him, and "not stir him up till he please," as the Bride's frequent desire and resolution is in the Song. 4. It may look to death that is coming, and will put an end to all communions here; after which there will be no more com-

munions on earth. And indeed it is suitable that ye were now bethinking yourselves, What if we never get another? Ought we not then to feed well on this? If any thing have been amiss or wanting, labour to get it made up. O believers in Christ, take home a sealed covenant with you, and read it over and over again: If any defect hath been on your part, write it yet in: for, if any blank be, it is certainly on our side, and not on Christ's: And indeed, 'tis God's great mercy, that a seal of his covenant may be useful a long time after it is gotten: slighted baptisms and abused communions may be yet useful, if we could make the right use of them: And I do not question but this communion did the disciples more good after Christ was gone from them, than it did now when he was with them at table. 5. It may look to eternity. Now we are living men and women on earth, but within a little we will be gone, "and our places will know us no more:" very probably, within twenty, thirty, forty or fifty years, we shall be either drinking of this new wine in heaven above, or of that cup of the unmixed wine of the wrath of God, having no rest day nor night. O profane atheist, unbeliever, hollow-hearted hypocrite, and sligher of Christ all thy days, what a bitter draught will that be, when God shall put into thy hand the cup of his indignation, which shall be for ever poured out unto thee, and shall never come from thy head? O drunkard, tippler, and belly-god, bethink thyself how that draught will go down with thee: The Lord, "with his one foot on earth, and the other on the sea, with an uplifted hand to heaven, hath sworn, that, within a little, time shall be no-more." Ye that are young people may, if ye will, follow the sight of your eyes, and the way of your own hearts, and may take your pleasure in the days of your youth: but know and remember that God will bring you to judgment: Your time is wearing away, and ye will wear away; 'tis but a little, and ye will hear no more preachings, and get no more warnings. O take them in time, if ye be wise: and the Lord perswade you so to do.

In the Third place, The scope of the advertisement and consolation is observable. When he was giving them the cup, and told them that "'tis the cup of the new testament in his blood:" he subjoins, "But I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth," &c. This he doth, First, Because

he would send them away advertised and assured, that there is a farther ~~ben~~ (to speak so) a more inward room in religion, than the most lively and comfortable ordinance here on earth doth afford: a higher and more intense spiritual practice, than any outward part of religion: He would have them to go away thinking with themselves, that all is not done that may be done; that all is not won at, which may be had; that they are not yet holy enough, nor happy enough. O place not, for Christ's sake, place not your religion here, I was at the sacrament, or I got my communion: Wo to that empty sound, and to them who lean all their weight on it; ye may come and abide here for a time, and go away leaving the marrow of the matter behind you: All is not yet done. A Second reason is, "Because he would have them parting and going from the communion with some thoughts of death, of their approaching change and passing out of time, and of eternity quickly marching upon them." And indeed it were good going from the communion, and from every other ordinance, with such thoughts as these. Death is fast coming on me, and I will be soon gone (saith our Lord on the matter to the disciples) and ye will ere long follow me, and it is not these ordinances that will be your life in eternity. It were good that we came to the Lord's table, to preaching and prayer, and went away as dying men and women: This would lay much of our pride, deaden us to the world, and make us endeavour to hold a loose grip of all things in it, and would keep us under the kindly sense of the changeableness, uncertainty and short continuance of them all; and might be of more use and worth to us, than twenty thanksgiving-sermons: Labour then to go from every ordinance, as if ye were not to enjoy another. A Third reason may be, "That our Lord would lead in his followers to look after some stamp of heaven, and of the glorious communion that is a-coming, on their spirits; and would have them going from the ordinances with such thoughts." Alas! we have very few such thoughts; our conversation is very little or not at all in heaven. Believers think, and think often, that these rags will be rent off us, and we shall be set down on the throne with Christ in that raiment of needle-work. It is a good token, when a person goes from a communion, from preaching

and prayer, more divine and heavenly, making every ordinance the step of a stair (as it were) to ascend upward, having a high esteem of heaven, and a heart holly eager and bent on it, content, nay desirous to begone, whenever he shall see it meet; and till then, putting on and keeping on the whole armour of God, making for one assault of temptation after another; heavenly in his whole walk, in his actions, words and thoughts. As ye would not, O believers, interrupt your communion with God in Christ, study to be heavenly in your conversation; for saith the apostle, Philip. iii. 20. "Our conversation is in heaven, from whence we look for the Saviour." Lay aside (as if he had said) your earthly-mindedness, away with that; and be heavenly in your conversation, for our conversation is such; and believers are described to be such as love Christ's appearing. A Fourth reason may be. "That our Lord" "would hearten and comfort his disciples, and send them" "away refreshed;" yea, it is to root out their unbelief, and to arm them against approaching trials. So then, 1. "Our Lord Jesus allows believers to go from the communion, and proportionally from every ordinance rightly" "come to, cheerful and comforted:" And therefore he leaves them with this word, telling them that they will have hard and sad days; but withal bids them cheer themselves in the assured expectation of a day coming; when he and they shall drink the new wine in heaven. Our Lord would have believers humble, thinking on death, and making ready for it daily; yet he would not have them tortured with the thoughts of it, but cheerful, as having his joy for their strength; tho' he would not have their joy carnal, but heavenly: And it is the token of a right communicant, and of a good hearer of the word, when a person goes away from it more spiritually cheered and more heavenly-minded.

2. "There is nothing that can be more heartsome, cheering" "and refreshing to the believer, than the lively hope of" "communion, and of a seat on the throne, in heaven with" "Christ; and it is the mark and character of a believer, to" "have no lower design." Alas for the senseless way of hearing the word, and of communicating, customary to many, who have no other nor higher design than to partake of the outward ordinance! 'Tis a heartsome thing to go from the table of the Lord with this sweet and heavenly

meditation, Christ and I will meet again ere long at a table in heaven. 3. "The thoughts of heaven, and the hope thereof may well sustain a believer, were there never so many BUTS and wants in their present condition here." We will not be long together, saith he, there will be a scattering; but this may keep you from weeping and mourning, as those who have no hope, that the day cometh when we shall meet again, and never part asunder. It is really a wonder, that we have so few serious and solacing thoughts of coming to heaven: There are none who look for a rich loading coming home by sea, but they will comfort themselves in the expectation of it; why do we not then comfort ourselves in the thoughts of heaven, since we profess to have a hope of being there? even because we are carnal and earthly: And it says, that we either think heaven little worth, or that it is an insufficient and unvalid right that is to be had to it, or that we do not really believe it. All the silver and gold in the world comforts not a poor body, because he hath no hope to come by it; so there are not a few hearers of the gospel, who hear much of heaven, and of the hope of it, that never refresheth them. A Fifth reason may be, "To waken up longing desires, and to sharpen and put an edge upon an appetite, in his followers, after heaven, and to teach them not to place their happiness on any thing on this side heaven:" otherwise he would never have put their satisfaction to a term so far off: But he overleaps (to speak so, with reverence) all the brave days that they had and were to have here, and gives them this for their full satisfaction, that the day is a-coming when he will "drink the wine new with them in his Father's kingdom:" and would have them, in their flight, never resting nor sitting down, till they be there; for he sends them away hungering for that communion-table. And we would yet again exhort and beseech you to study to be in case to go from the communion, and from every sermon, having some serious thoughts of heaven, and longings for it; believing that the day, the joyful day is coming, when Christ and ye will meet, and never shed or separate again; when "ye shall be with him where he is, and be set with him at his table, and on his throne," never to rise off it any more again: Blessed be God, that that desirable day is coming. Believers in Christ,

cheer yourselves in the hope of it. If there be any of you (as, alas! I fear there be very many) that relish not this blessed change, there is a sad and sorrowful change before you. O be busy, very busy to have your interest in Christ, and the hope of heaven well secured, by union and communion with him here; that so ye may have the well-grounded hope of heaven, and may frequently draw comfort from it: And, O that we could sunder so! The little inch and moment of time, that we have, will soon and very quickly wear away, and be at an end: Go then, my dear friends, with this well-fixed resolution, that ye must needs, in God's own way, have heaven, and be eternally happy in the soul-satisfying and ravishing enjoyment of that fullest and sweetest, never to be interrupted communion, that will be there: And thank God and Christ the Mediator for the least measure of the well-grounded hope of it; and make it your business to have your conversation suited to, and smelling strong of that blessed hope.

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